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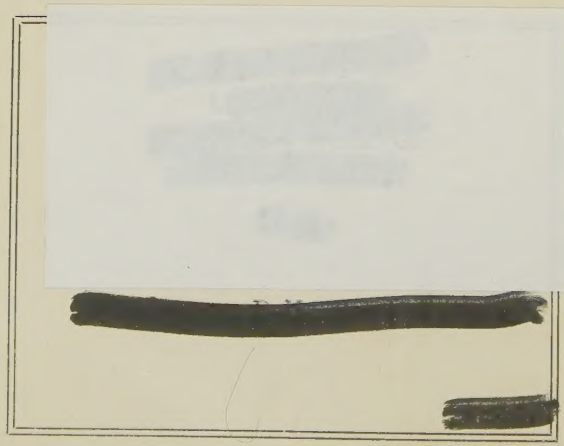

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The Representative.
Inscrib'd
To the Writers in the Universal Penman.
Preferring None where Numbers have a Claim,
This Emblem Sketch declares the Author's Aim:
A REPRESENTATIVE of Skill refin'd,
Where all the Penman's Qualities are join'd;
Whose Use and Ornament Unite in One?
To Sense, or Grace, the Counter or the Throne:
Art still improving from plain Nature's Source;
With Judgment, Freedom; and with Freedom, Force.
This Height of Excellence whilst You pursue,
Accept, each Penman, Your just Merits Due!
So This as You advance, the Picture is of You.
J. BANCKS.

From a print in the British Museum by Gravelot.

RICHARD SAVAGE

A MYSTERY IN BIOGRAPHY

By

STANLEY V. MAKOWER

Author of "The Mirror of Music," "Cecilia," "Perdita," etc.

WITH SEVENTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS

London: HUTCHINSON & CO.
Paternoster Row: 1909

To

R. C. T.

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NOTE.—*It is in accordance with the mystery in which the origin of Richard Savage is involved that no portrait of him has survived. Nor have repeated efforts to obtain portraits of Anne, Countess of Macclesfield and the fourth Earl of Rivers been, so far, rewarded with any success. The picture chosen as a frontispiece in this volume is one of those symbolical delineations by which the French artist, Hubert François Bourguignon, known as Gravelot, a contemporary of Savage, made his long residence in England a chapter in the history of English art in the first half of the eighteenth century. After a study of pictures like this of the poet as an ideal type and of Hogarth's pourtrayal of real misery in "The Distressed Poet," the life of Savage acquires an interest different in kind from any that a portrait of the poet himself would have provided. The features of the man have escaped posterity, but the ideas he represented are all the more sharply accentuated*

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RICHARD SAVAGE

A Mystery in Biography

I

About a fortnight after Michaelmas, in the year sixteen hundred and ninety-six, a hackney coach stopped at the door of a house belonging to the group known as the Old Bailey. The occupier of the carriage made no sign of stepping out, but, putting through the window a head closely veiled and hooded, cried sharply, "Mrs. Pheasant!" On appearing in the street, the person thus addressed, in response to a beckoning finger, approached the coach window, and, after a brief colloquy in whispers, suffered herself to be drawn within, her entry being promptly followed by the raising of a blind which effectually screened the interior of the coach and its two occupiers from the curiosity of street loiterers. It took some minutes before the driver on the box could succeed in settling into an attitude suitable for indefinite waiting. When he did settle, his impassive appearance completed the picture of suspended motion to which the stooping

head of his horse, the reins flowing slack through his hand, and the impenetrable air of the coach itself lent compelling suggestion.

Within the coach the substance of what passed between the two women was peculiar. If Mrs. Pheasant was surprised at the nature of the communication thus suddenly imparted to her, hers was the surprise of one not easily disconcerted by the unexpected. The voice from the coach had sounded familiar in those ears, recalling for a moment her singular introduction to this lady in the summer of last year. On behalf of a friend who chanced to be absent with the army in Flanders, a gentleman had visited her. How well she remembered the June evening on which, in conformity with his delicate and confidential errand, he had escorted her to Piccadilly, leaving her beneath a leafy tree by the side of a young lady whose little eyes peered keenly at her through the mask in which she had spoken. Then the voice had faltered over a word or two, in a manner betraying suspicion of the stranger. Now, as they sat side by side in the seclusion of the coach, it was firm and moved with that freedom which comes only after an interchange of confidences (whether voluntary or enforced) diving to the roots of life itself.

The lady spoke rapidly and to the point, supplying a great many particulars; with every one of which, however, it was necessary for Mrs. Pheasant to be acquainted in order to understand the range of actions

and the functions of people to be enveloped in a secrecy which, to serve its purpose, must be kept wholly inviolate. There was no time to lose. Things had to be done, persons to be beguiled. Who and what were they, she enumerated with the aid of a brain as ready in the invention of practical expedients as it was unclouded by the pressure of circumstance. Apart from the remuneration offered for her services (and this was to be on a scale commensurate with the size of the undertaking), Mrs. Pheasant could not fail to be flattered by the superior part allotted to her in the proposed arrangement. Her sense of humour worked almost as effectively as her material interest in favour of expressing compliance. With the lady's reiteration of a date and a final emphasis on the necessity of observing the strictest precaution at every step, the conversation ended almost as abruptly as it began. Mrs. Pheasant emerges from the coach into the October air, the chosen pilot of her young mistress's fortunes through the troubled waters of this crisis, a figure of immense consequence. The will for which she has thus consented to act as executrix is no mere scrip of the lawyers to represent the wishes of a dead testator, but the living will of a lively young woman debarred by the nature of the case from attending to her many and minute requirements without the covering assistance of an intermediary.

From the obscurity of documents comparatively inaccessible, it is worth while to revive the character

and the achievements of Elizabeth Pheasant. Portentous she looms at the outset of this narrative, like some sinister angel spreading the dark wings of an amiable obsequiousness over the shifts and subterfuges of her lady. Part of her mission is to conceal her own identity throughout this business, for the purposes of which she hires a house in Fox Court, Gray's Inn Lane, being scrupulous to avoid saying or doing anything which may serve as a link to connect Mrs. Pheasant of the Old Bailey with the new tenant "Mrs. Leigh." Having provided the house with suitable furniture, her next care is to engage a maid, a matter on which she has received especial warning from her lady, for the girl must not only be useful, but also able to hold her tongue, obeying her superiors rather than any flights of conscience, which, as this lady knew by a former experience, are apt to increase the difficulties of a complicated situation. From the time within which all these things are satisfactorily established, it is safe to credit Mrs. Pheasant with a capacity for rapid action, for on the seventh of November already arrives Madam Smith, the lady of the coach, to take up her lodging with Mrs. Leigh. The gentlewoman, so Sarah Redhead the maid learns, is a captain's wife. Her baggage is of modest dimensions, and the lady herself of so retiring a disposition that she rarely ventures without the house even for the benefit of fresh air and exercise.

Wearily and anxiously Madam Smith passes her days. Concealment sits heavily on one in whom the spirits of youth and health in other circumstances did more than duty for the beauty which is so often and so arbitrarily supposed to be their accompaniment. As if a temperament were not, for the honour and pride of youth, a more considerable possession than the complexion of a rose-leaf or the nice angle of chin and nose! But even a temperament is at times clouded. Madam Smith is indeed dejected, and cannot shine in her true colours. Occasionally the tall Captain puts in an appearance towards nightfall, scattering the clouds with the sun of that boisterous presence, more like a lover's than a husband's. But alas! (devil take the cursed necessity for so much circumspection!) his visits are made at rare intervals. How inexpressibly dull the periods of his absence! What a Christmas—without cake or candle-light, or the numerous company she loved! How ominous the near presence of Mrs. Leigh, so attentive, so unobtrusive, so capable! As the days advance the landlady's steady eye betrays an increased vigilance, and she manifests a tendency to hover about her lady's person. Sarah Redhead moves silently, discreetly, from room to room. The heavy atmosphere of waiting, waiting, a sort of preternatural suspense settles over the inmates of the house.

Suddenly, one night, towards the middle of January, they are all astir. It is past midnight. There is much running hither and thither, upstairs and down-

stairs, and the stillness of the little court in Gray's Inn Lane is broken by the sound of footsteps hurrying across the cobbles in the direction of the open street. Under the grave stress of the impending, the imminent event, the figure of Mrs. Leigh swells to symbolical proportions. She is the august mistress of great Nature's ceremonial. At her nod spring into activity a little army of menials, to do those minor offices over which she presides—maids, messengers, apothecaries, cooks to make cordials, boys to light fires. Amid the hum of voices and the shuffling of feet, do you hear the faint rattle of wheels? Nearer and nearer it comes, until a hackney coach is pulled up short almost beneath Madam Smith's window. A moment's silence. Then the door of the coach opens. Mrs. Leigh hastens to the encounter of the new-comer, who alights rapidly and passes in close conference with her hostess into the house and up the stairs into the lodger's room.

II

The curtains had been closely drawn across the windows to keep out the cold. At the far end of the room burned a candle. Now and then dim objects assumed a momentary certainty of shape from the firelight when some flame leaped and flickered even through the narrowed space dividing the hangings round Madam Smith's bed. It was six o'clock, and the dawn was still faint in that bleak January sky when the crisis was passed.

On the word of Sarah Redhead, the maid, it is recorded in the documents that the lady was mighty pleased when she heard it was a boy. He had been born with a caul, which, as the midwife took pains to impress on her, was a sign of good fortune. On Monday evening, only two days later, the child was baptized in a room adjoining the lady's by the minister of Saint Andrew's, the big church in Holborn. The sexton accompanied Isaac Burbridge to Fox Court for this purpose. The Captain and a friend stood godfathers, and the godmothers were this friend's sister and Mrs. Leigh herself. No others were present at the ceremony. Oddly enough, the sexton as well as the father went by the name of John Smith.

Madam figured in the register as Mary, and the child's name was duly entered as Richard.

Mrs. Leigh betrayed no surprise when, in the gentleman, who with his sister had performed these friendly offices, she recognised a familiar figure. Was not this the man who in the preceding year had spoken with her on behalf of an absent soldier, and had effected her first acquaintance, in a manner not easily forgotten, with Richard's mother? But this was a time for all to exercise a high discretion. Events belonging to the "Pheasant" period must not be allowed to impinge upon present circumstances. Even now the lady always concealed her face when approached by the maid or the midwife. As for Captain John Smith, Mrs. Leigh took care not to permit any natural curiosity as to who he was, to appear in her demeanour. Nevertheless, his gallant bearing and an indescribable air of quality made it a quite plausible assumption that he was no more Captain John Smith than his lady was Mary; certain it is, he looked the picture of a man to fight a useful battle for King William against the French in Flanders.

Mrs. Leigh's immediate concern, however, was with the baby, whose removal to a neighbourhood more suitable to its tender age (and also to the concealment of its place of entry into the world) must suffer no delay. Nothing could be better for a child than the country air of Hampstead, and in this conviction

Mrs. Leigh promptly secured the services of Mary Peglear, a nurse residing in that quarter.

To watch narrowly the career of the infant Richard, from the time of his entrance into the world to the time when, to the permanent confusion of the historian, his identity and the particulars of his life became solely a matter of conjecture, is to learn a lesson in the fine art of baby farming.

If it was Richard "Smith" who with his new nurse disappeared so soon after his birth from Fox Court, it was Richard "Leigh" who, thanks to the generosity of Mother Pheasant, parting with her assumed name when she no longer had a use for it, breathed the invigorating air of Hampstead under the care of Mary Peglear. Possibly the air of Hampstead proved too bracing, or is there some other way of accounting for the fact that in six months it was thought well to try a different locality? By that time signs were not wanting that, whatever good fortune might attend the little fellow, his existence was likely to be a source of trouble to his mother. Accordingly, Anne Portlock, a baker's wife, on hearing that her Richard was ailing, rode post from Oxford to claim her darling from Nurse Peglear. And here, for the sake of insinuating one passage of love (fleeting enough) into the certified history of the child, it is tempting to believe that Nurse Peglear had grown fond of him. At all events she disputed possession of him with the Portlocks, and even went so far as to bring the matter before a Justice.

I see the smile on Mrs. Pheasant's face when she learned that the Portlocks had been permitted by this penetrating public officer to bear off the child as their own.

What follows? A blank. This Richard disappears beyond any possibility of certain recognition in any recorded document. Curiosity mounts high. Never yet has it been enabled to peep over the high wall of contrivance which shut out the view to his fate. The passionless biographer, in his eternal quest for facts, pauses in dismay at the slender record of this Richard's life. Where did he go when he left the Portlocks? Did he ever leave them? Happily a large portion of what men do and think is never chronicled for the comprehension of posterity. Is not the historical legacy bequeathed to us in the character and accomplishments of Mrs. Pheasant enriched by the impossibility of answering these questions? What became of this remarkable woman? Again, a blank.

I may be wrong in assuming her to have lived to an advanced age, ever adding new claims to be ranked among the foremost exponents of her dark art. But I am grateful for the privilege of speculation. I like to picture her grave in some rural spot suggestive of well-earned repose after an arduous and exacting life. To that grave she must have taken many secrets inviolate. She died obscure; but for her, that was no misfortune. One so successful in burying the

history of others may well have been content that her own should be hidden. Is it not mere chance, an idle swing in the pendulum of human curiosity, that enables me to rescue her name and fame from utter extinction?

III

At the time when this narrative begins, thirteen years had passed since the marriage of Anne Mason, second daughter of King Charles the Second's Comptroller of the Household, to Lord Brandon, son of the Earl of Macclesfield. About ten years her senior (she was only fifteen), the young husband soon found himself wrestling at unequal odds with the character of Petruchio. He was no actor, and he suffered pain in yielding to the conclusion that to his cost he had preferred this Katharine before any other woman. There is no reason to suppose that she deliberately entrapped him. Such conduct is altogether rarer in real life than in the romances. But she was eager to leave her home, often at variance with her mother, prematurely curious of life. We have to imagine her rather taciturn during the period in which Lord Brandon wooed her. But, for the suitor, her silence was only another language: modesty and innocence are often tongue-tied. In the course of the marriage treaty he received many affronts. If he was to win her, there was to be no room for doubt on whose side condescension lay. She was no beggar, as her mother, the wife of Sir Richard Sutton of Bishop's

Castle, Salop, and of Sutton, Surrey, took care to hint at him. He bore all with a light heart and a stubborn will.

They were married in the June of 1683. Little more than a month later, Lord Brandon was arrested on a suspicion of disaffection to the reigning Government. Three years earlier he had been one of the Grand Jury who had presented the King's brother as a Popish recusant at Westminster. Nevertheless, he succeeded in obtaining an acquittal. But his release from the Tower in the February following his marriage did not restore him to domestic happiness. Between two persons of such violent temperaments peace could hardly be expected to prevail. He had the passion, but he lacked the patience to subdue her. As a youth he had killed a footboy after a drunken frolic with Lord Cornwallis in St. James's Park. Both were charged with murder, but Brandon was safe in France before the trial came on. He was found guilty, however, in his absence, his friend being acquitted : and some time elapsed before the granting of a pardon had enabled him to return to England. The prevailing characteristic of this young man's actions was suddenness. Suddenly he had taken this boy by the shoulder, tripping up his heels and flinging him to the ground from which he never rose again—his servants maintained that their master "only hit the boy a box on the ear of which he died"—suddenly he had descried the summit of human happiness in a marriage

with this wayward girl with the dark complexion and the little eyes so penetrating in the woman, so provocative in the child of fifteen. Equally suddenly, after the brief period leading to disillusion, he resolved never more to live with her as long as he lived.

On the second of March 1684 he went into the country leaving a long letter for his wife, which he bade her show to her father and mother. "I have governed my passions," he wrote, "under great and frequent provocation, either by silence, or by avoiding your company." For a young man of scarce twenty-five years addressing a wife of scarce seventeen, the wording of this letter is highly impressive. She had taunted him with mercenary motives in the marriage, neglect, violence even to the point of striking her. With the memory of the dead footboy still comparatively fresh in his mind, the last of these charges whips his resentment to white heat. What life they spent at Gerard House in each other's company passed mainly in recriminations. She had used every contrivance of a fertile invention to make her husband appear infamous, sometimes even going to the length of "sitting in an outer room to entertain company by a coal fire, as if I refused you wood." On the bitterness of his own humiliation he dwelled lightly, disappointed as he had been of the content he hoped for in the state of marriage, having found neither a faithful nor a cheerful companion. A naïve tenderness shines forth in the admission that he married her on

no other consideration but that he preferred her before any other; and at the close of the letter, after exonerating his relations as well as himself of the occasion for the separation, he writes: "Never woman came into a family more disposed to love you."

At seven o'clock in the morning Lord Brandon's servant delivered the letter to his lady. When she read it, so perverse may be the impulses of human nature, she was deeply concerned and began to cry bitterly. She had borne with this man as a suitor; as a husband, in spite of his deficiencies and her frequent and emphatic denunciation of them to his face, she would have been prepared to bear longer with him; as a fugitive from her person he was inflicting a deep and incurable wound on her pride.

Something which happened in the year following their separation gave a startling turn to their relations with each other. Lord Brandon was again committed to the Tower, and on the fourteenth of November he was brought to the King's Bench bar and arraigned on an indictment of high treason against the late king. The evidence against the prisoner was overwhelming; he was clearly implicated in the conspiracy to seize King Charles either as he came from the Parliament House or on his return from Newmarket; sinister conversations at "The George and Vulture" betraying Brandon's complicity, were sworn to; it was even maintained with much colour that he had intended to set up the Duke of Monmouth against his present Majesty and had

written a letter to the Duke forwarding this traitorous purpose. Nor did his defence, ingenious as it was in some particulars, avail to save him. It took little longer than half an hour for the jury to agree that he was guilty. A fortnight later he was brought up for sentence ; it was ordered that he should be executed on the following Friday. Mr. Buckingham, my lord's confidential servant, in the extremity of despair at the fate of his master, now heard that his chances of a pardon would be seriously impaired if it were known to the Queen that he did not live with his wife. The situation was complicated by a rumour that Lady Brandon's sister was one of the King's mistresses.

Buckingham had a hard task. His master grew frigid at the mention of Lady Brandon. Was it not enough that he had few more days to live? Once already he had received pardon for the murder of the footboy. High treason was a crime with which it was idle to expect a sovereign's sympathy. His thoughts travelled back to the days of his boyhood in France, to the tender memories of his mother, who was a French woman. Better for him if he had made his home across the water. It had taken an Act of Parliament to make an Englishman of him : only to this miserable end. So his thoughts wandered as the anxious Buckingham continued to implore his consent to receive his lady. When at last he suffered his attention to be bound on the subject of the man's entreaty, he grew impatient. Was it likely that she who had injured him so deeply

would now bestir herself to save him from the axe? When he was at a loss for argument, Buckingham fell upon his knees and begged so hard that his lord could no longer refuse him. Conceive the lady's astonishment when, soon after this interview with his master, Buckingham rushed into her presence begging her to come.

If probabilities are to be measured by the surface of events, the likelihood spoke indeed for my lady's refusal. But Anne Brandon's conception of revenge was nobler than this. Fortune had recaptured for this outraged lady her fugitive; misfortune such as this made him doubly hers. When the possibility of helping to avert this calamitous conclusion by a simple act of charity came full upon her in the fevered entreaty of the messenger, she turned giddy; tears less of love than of triumph started to those young eyes. Has the novelist in his search for romance ever alighted upon a situation more poignantly engrossing?

It would have taken a woman far less sensible of romantic influence than this girl of seventeen not to be swayed by such compulsion. In all haste she repaired to the Tower. Who can forbear to linger for a while on the imagination of their meeting? Has the nearness of death ever availed more potently to efface the memory of past bitterness? At the very point at which these people are once more flung by fate into each other's company, history lets fall her curtain, the documents reward curiosity in a niggardly

spirit. We know that Lady Brandon spared neither money nor jewels in the prosecution of her purpose. From the date at which the order for her husband's execution was made, to the dread hour itself, only seven days were to pass: few indeed for the business to which my lady devoted herself.

More than half this time expired; and the sentence was still unrecalled. On the second of December 1685, King James the Second declared that he had reprieved the Lord Brandon. In the following January the prisoner was released on bail, and by the end of August in the same year he was granted the Royal pardon.

The probable issue (on the strength of these facts alone) to the story of this alliance, with its tempestuous interruptions, is the reconciliation of the husband and wife, driven at last into the port of domestic felicity by the strong wind of unforeseen circumstance and the unsuspected emotions which it might be assumed to evoke. His love for her at the outset had led him captive; her perverse rescue of the man who had fled from her, if its origin were pity or the sweetness of a revenge which might lie in mastering his destiny in spite of himself, must have carried her into depths of feeling far profounder than mere pleasure at the thought that his life had been spared. They were both still very young; and if, as her own mother had said, a woman must not part from her husband for two or three angry words, surely in the light of this recent passage of their lives their stars had once more

crossed each other's orbit. To doubt the wisdom of their reunion, was to question the disposition of the solar system itself.

Nevertheless the facts of the case disprove this tempting conclusion to their dissension. He had vowed never more to live with her, and he kept his word. Her sister Dorothy was now the wife of Sir William Brownlow; and for ten years which bring us to the date at which this narrative begins, Anne lived at the house of the Brownlows. As a consequence of the recent death of her father-in-law, who had disliked her from the first, she had become Countess of Macclesfield. The circumstances through which she was led to conceal her identity under the name of Madam Smith, and their almost immediate consequences, have still to be narrated.

IV

When Dinah Allsup, the Countess's maid, was confronted by a tall, handsome gentleman of a very fair complexion who asked for her lady, about the dusk of the evening, some time in the autumn of 1694, it may safely be assumed that she did not make much ado about letting him in. No man could have come with better qualifications for overcoming the scruples of a maid (if she had any) than Richard Savage, who only recently had succeeded his father as the fourth Earl Rivers. Fourteen years earlier an elder brother had died to make way for this young master in debauchery to the peerage. His father had kept him waiting for the honour a considerable time longer. Richard's importance as a public figure in the history of his country has received adequate attention from the biographer. As a youth he had shown conspicuous ability to turn the natural gift of cunning to his own advantage.

It was like this. His father was by nature parsimonious, and one evening, being asked by his son for money, he was imprudent enough, in the presence of a witness, to declare that he had none in the house. It happened that the next day was a Sunday, and

when the household were at church, Master Richard chose the most direct way of obtaining what he wanted. He forced open a cabinet in his father's closet and helped himself to the money. Most probably he boasted of the achievement, and thought to teach his deceitful father a lesson for the future. But the Earl was furious, and applied to the Lord Chief Justice for a warrant for his son's arrest. Richard not only denied the facts, but displayed an ingenuity which gave promise of a brilliant career, whether in civic distinction or in crime. He brought evidence of his father's declaration that there was no money in the house, and the Earl was persuaded to drop the application.

Like Macclesfield, Savage had married young. Separation was not, however, his remedy for the indiscretion. He was distinguished as one of the greatest rakes in England in an age of keen competition for supremacy in this laborious profession. Like Macclesfield, he was an ardent admirer of Lord Mohun, who was a mere boy when he had stood on trial for the murder of the actor Mountfort. Like Macclesfield, he was attracted by something more powerful than beauty in Anne of the dark complexion and the small eyes.

In brain as well as in character, Lord Rivers was a better match for her than her husband. She honoured in him his dishonourable gifts of cunning and unscrupulousness. Fidelity in marriage or in any

other sort of alliance between a man and a woman exercised no spell of attraction over her. Good company and personal intrepidity were what she looked for in a man, and she found both in this handsome soldier, who was as formidable at the card-table as on the field of battle. He it was who had led the Grenadiers to the attack under heavy fire when Cork was taken for King William. And he had fought the French in Flanders as boldly as the rebels in Ireland, being promoted major-general only a year before he returned to England to take his seat in the House of Lords and add the Countess to the long list of his mistresses. A lingering touch of illness provided their encounter with an excuse for tenderness on her part, for while the battle of Landen was being fought he had been invalided at Brussels.

In boldest fashion Dinah Allsup discloses herself in the part of complaisant sentinel to her lady's chamber. It was in the spring of the year, to accept her own version of the matter, that the tall gentleman came and was let in at one door and out at another. A year later he is gone, and my lady is with child. He has left behind him, however, a friend to watch tenderly enough over her comfort and requirements, the friend who, on that June evening, brought the invaluable Mrs. Pheasant to the masked lady in Piccadilly. A month later Mrs. Richardson, midwife to the Princess Anne, was sent for to a house in Queen Street to a person she knew not, who appeared to her in a mask.

The lady had indeed been imprudent to the verge of folly, removing from her sister's house only a few hours before her confinement. What is more, she strove throughout her ordeal to keep the mask on her face, thereby adding a touch of the grotesque to circumstances in which it is rare for the fear of detection to keep pace with the convulsions of nature. Her condition gave cause for alarm, and while the fear of death was upon her, the voice of her attendant sounded in her ear begging the bequest of a sprigged Indian petticoat. Perhaps the very vileness of the creature challenged to her rescue all that remained of vitality. Within six days of the birth, the tempestuous lady ordered herself to be carried back to her sister's house in a chair. Small wonder that she suffered a chill needing the skill of a French surgeon and a summer cure at the Bath to effect her recovery.

The child? A daughter, christened Anne Savage; Anne, after the mother who struggled while she bore her to hide her identity beneath her mask, and fled from her child before it was a week old; Savage, after the father who, while all these things were happening, was once more away with King William's army fighting the French in Flanders.

But why these names, when so much trouble had been taken to conceal the identity of the parents? What an oversight, to have left this one white spot in the dark transaction, so perilously like a signal

to guide the lady's husband to her undoing. Never mind! The Pheasant is still there to recover lost ground.

Her command of nurses was prodigious. With that pilot to guide the ship of their child's fate, these parents needed not to fear discovery. Perched high in the crow's-nest, unseen, but seeing far from her look-out, Dame Pheasant issued the orders which governed the passage of little Anne, from one nurse to another, from one malady to another, until Port Death was reached. She herself has left behind her a description of the melancholy event. When the child was sick, my lady was much concerned, and told the nurse to tell Mrs. Pheasant to tell an apothecary to come and cut an issue in its neck, all of which was done; but the child fell into fits of convulsion and died about the middle of March. The burial was in Chelsea Church; the funeral most decently ordered, even to the giving of gloves and burnt claret. No doubt Mrs. Pheasant was deeply touched when, after little Anne was dead, my lady sent for a lock of her hair.

To one on whom the burden of paternity sat as lightly as it did on Lord Rivers, the news of the birth and death of this child, whom he never saw, can have caused comparatively little concern on his return to England. He had no wish, however, to place the lady's title and fortune in needless jeopardy, and when she was again with child by him, he was

ready to assume the title of Captain John Smith for the purpose of all action in the matter. The plan of preserving secrecy by the adoption of assumed names was new to Mrs. Pheasant, and she was so deeply infected with the convenience and the simplicity of it, that when a second child was born to the Countess of Macclesfield, she telescoped the boy through a series of aliases into permanent obscurity. There was indeed increased need of precautions, for Dinah Allsup, who knew her lady's condition, was all for divulging the matter, to ease her conscience, to Lady Mason, the mother of the Countess. It had been necessary to buy her silence with a present of money.

But now, to increase Lady Macclesfield's anxiety, three weeks had not passed since the birth of little Richard, when she learned that Lord Macclesfield had been to Mrs. Pheasant's lodgings to inquire after his lady. To be inaccessible was now her prime care. From Fox Court she removed, in order still further to obscure her whereabouts, to the house of a friend in the City. The Earl pressed her family to reveal her place of hiding. For a time she defied every attempt to trace her. But it could only be a question of time. Her husband had discovered one of the midwives. Probably it was Mrs. Richardson, in whom the refusal of the Indian petticoat still rankled. The Countess now fled from one place of lodging to another, befriended, let us hope, by the

amiable Pheasant, until, weary of flight, she emerged in the daylight to face the consequences of infidelity, which after all it might be hard to prove. Whatever sympathy Mrs. Pheasant may have felt with the dismay of her lady, she could console herself with the certainty that it would take a very astute lawyer indeed to find out "Richard Smith." Thus the mission of her dark art was fulfilled, and her figure fades from this narrative. Occasionally, it is true, across its later scenes the memory of her earlier presence casts a gleam, fitful and fugitive as the after-play of lightning when some storm has ceased, mysteriously surviving the clamour, and bathing the landscape in the light reflected from a menace that has passed.

V

When once the Earl of Macclesfield had resolved to obtain a divorce from the Countess, he pursued his intention with dispatch. With his whole heart he had wedded her; with his whole heart and with his head too he would now find means to break their union. No industry, no expense, was spared to gather all the evidence necessary to present a complete case. By the summer of the year in which the second child had been born, all was ready, and the divorce suit was begun in the Ecclesiastical Court to which it belonged in law.

The proceedings were elaborate, the examination and cross-examination of witnesses exhaustive, but the pace at which the proof of my lady's guilt was established was slow. Not that the machinery of the spiritual law was radically deficient, but the possibilities for organised obstruction were infinite, and my lady was versed in all their minutiae to a degree that compels admiration. If the Earl was to triumph in the end, she was determined that he should be heartily sick of the contest. She had nothing to lose by procrastination. Months went by. Fact by fact the

proofs were accumulated to her destruction. An honourable body of law, dexterously wielded by high authorities, was grinding the thin grains of her defence to almost invisible powder. Not that the petitioner was suffered to figure as a martyr, for she knew how to exploit the violence of his nature to her advantage. But the law was clear ; no possible interpretation of it could exonerate her. Yet she must be present in court to hear the sentence pronounced. How, then, if at the critical moment she found pretexts to postpone appearing ?

Like some Homeric hero faring ill at the hands of an adversary, she invoked the divine protection of the goddess of procrastination and rose lightly on her wings, snatched into invisibility at the very moment when the final triumph of her adversary became imminent. The Earl and his supporters were left with their weapons poised in mid-air. The Dean of the Court nodded and shook his head from side to side. In all the high-sounding phraseology of the law she was ordered to appear. Still she remained shrouded in the cloak of the goddess. The order was repeated, and again it was ignored. Was the whole dignity of the Court to be flouted with impunity ? She was declared guilty of contempt. Most excellent. She had diverted the petitioner's issue. The Court was more occupied with the preservation of its majesty than with the justice of the petition. What could be better ? Even if she had to go to

prison, it should still be as Anne, Countess of Macclesfield.

Exasperated by the difficulties of obtaining a sentence in the Ecclesiastical Court, and determined to divert his estate and honour from the lady who had become hateful in his sight, the Earl now took the desperate and unprecedented course of instituting a suit in the House of Lords. Unprecedented because never until this occasion had the parliamentary law of England been invoked as a substitute for spiritual remedy in dissolving a marriage. Of course my lady's lawyers took full advantage of the circumstance. The trial in the other Court, they argued, was still pending; my lady asked nothing but what the law fully entitled—leave to defend herself in the place in which she was accused; there had been no sentence, and this fact invalidated all efforts so far made to establish proof of infidelity; the cause was yet undetermined in the only Court which had power to adjudicate. Nevertheless, and in spite of these unanswerable arguments, the lady's unblushing declaration that she would give all the delays she could, turned the scale in her disfavour. It was a year and four days since "Richard Smith's" birthday when, on the twentieth of January, the lawyers fought out the matter.

It takes much less time to break than to make a precedent. Whether or no my lord was to be divorced from my lady was, in the light of history, an issue of trifling significance compared with that which was to

determine whether in such matters the jurisdiction of the Church was to be invaded by the law of Parliament. It took many months to settle the former of these questions ; the latter was solved in a few hours. The arguments of my lady's counsel were summarily overruled, and the case proceeded.

Still the Countess and her lawyers find means to delay the conduct of the Bill. Now she urges that several of her witnesses live out of town, and petitions for more time to bring them in ; now she asks postponement of the date appointed for their examination, for that her counsel are both retained in other cases on that day. But even the resources of delay are not infinite, and the House of Lords was a match for these devices. With a rapidity in marked contrast to the dilatory methods of the other Court, the fine web of damnatory evidence is gathered tight about my lady. Maids and midwives, nurses and registering clerks, the steward, the confidential servant, the kitchenmaid, the bearers of letters and the servers of writs, all appear to contribute, each a passage in the story which unfolds itself through the months of January and February. Is it chance that excludes the mention of Lord Rivers by name in these proceedings ? He is only "the tall gentleman, not my Lord Macclesfield" whom the maid let in at one door and out at another ; and his friend and the friend's sister, who stood sponsors to the male child "Richard Smith," although cited to appear, cannot be found, for they are

abroad in hiding. The figure of Mrs. Pheasant is conspicuous even in these surroundings. Has she not bargained for the keep of the little Richard ? Did she not with her own hands fetch the coffin to bury the little Anne Savage ? Savage ? The nurse who was to make an affidavit for its burial said she was told she might swear the name was Anne Smith or Anne Savage, whichever she pleased. A convenient name, Smith, which looks as well on a death certificate as on a birth register. There are at least forty witnesses to examine and cross-examine, to believe or to disbelieve. Some of the women cannot sign their names, and they put their marks instead on the depositions.

Not only does the Bill relate to the divorce of the parties, but also to the redistribution of their moneys. Even my lord's brother is affected, for what is to become of his interest in the estate if the Earl is free to marry again and have lawful issue ? Is he to be another victim to the designs of an adulteress ? "Richard Smith," too, and his dead sister must be pronounced illegitimate. All this has duly to be ordered, statements to be corroborated, misstatements corrected, the passions eliminated from the case, before it is in a fit state for adjudication by the Lords spiritual and temporal assembled in Parliament. The Bill has so to be framed as to cover all the issues involved. From the dry bones of its clauses which survive for the student of parliamentary law, who would guess at the lineaments of the live figures

whose sworn evidence tantalised and beguiled the House in Committee on so many occasions? What can be more dead than an Act of Parliament disposing of a *cause célèbre* more than two hundred years old?

But the details of the persons giving evidence (if they can be come at), the little prevarications as well as the gross perjuries, the things which reveal the element of human frailty undeviating from age to age—these are the human documents. Touch them, turn their soiled leaves where they lie buried in the archives of the Upper Chamber, and the whole of the little world which crowded about the Earl and the Countess in those days of the ninth year in King William the Third's reign, starts into being. It is all there, grinning at us with the freshness, the perplexing completeness of details and persons chronicled in a newspaper of yesterday. Our interest centres now, as it did for the readers of gossip in the very days of the suit, on the mysterious disappearance of "Richard Smith." Where did he go when he left the Portlocks? Did he ever leave them? If this great question exercised the lawyers while the case was being heard at Westminster, many years later it was to swell to a magnitude at which, if she was alive, Mrs. Pheasant herself must have been full of amazement.

Slowly the long arguments of counsel summing up what has been offered for and against the Bill, draw to a close. On the third of March, after a third reading,

the question is put. Shall the Bill pass? The answer is in the affirmative. Lords Halifax and Rochester alone register their dissent, holding the enactment to afford an evil precedent, of dangerous consequence in the future. A new page is added to the history of Divorce in England. With their spasmodic appearance in the documents of the case "Richard Smith" and the ominous figures who presided over his infancy, the Captain and the Captain's wife, the mothers Lee-Pheasant, and Portlock, Nurse Peglear, Sarah Redhead, and the rest of them vanish. Like silhouettes thrown on a screen from a magic lantern, they are gone, clean gone before we have enjoyed full opportunity of studying their peculiarities.

VI

But if Madam Smith, the Captain's wife, disappears, Anne, once Countess of Macclesfield, remains. Indeed, the staying power of this lady calls more than once for admiration in the course of this narrative. She had been defeated, but she might have fared far worse in the struggle. Restitution had been granted to her of her property before the marriage, and there were many to whom, in spite of her infidelities, she appeared as a victim to the violence and ill-humour of her husband. He had neglected her, humiliated her to the point of denying her any authority over their servants, refused her food when she was ill, suffered her to be turned from the house by an irate father-in-law. She had overlooked all and gone to him when he was under sentence in the Tower. If he had succeeded in establishing her guilt, he could not rob her of the compassion naturally extended to her in view of her youth and the misfortune of her alliance with one so little calculated to make any woman happy. Her condition was embarrassed, but not desperate. Marriage with the father of her children was impossible for two reasons: Lord Rivers was not a marrying man,

and—he was already married. But she was still a young woman, and her curiosity in life was of the kind that is not killed by mere misadventure. If she had failed as a wife, it is at least open to doubt if many women, misguided enough to marry at fifteen, would succeed any the better.

She had borne the responsibilities of maternity with as much impunity as the pains. The assumption that all women want to have children, are incurably fond of them if they do have them, and permanently dissatisfied if they do not, is based on an amiable and comforting misconception of the extent to which human nature is capable of exhibiting variety. Mothers are of many patterns. To some, their children are life itself; to others, mere episodes in life; to some, an experience wholly absorbing, incapable of explanation; to others, a dislocation wholly explicable in terms of language; to some, the blessing of God; to others, a visitation of the Devil. Between these extremes are to be found the many mothers inclining more or less, as the case may be, in the one direction or in the other.

With all his extravagances, his countless infidelities, his cunning and his want of scruple, Earl Rivers fails to arouse interest as an adept in paternity. As soldier, timeserver in politics, even as diplomatist, he figures in the annals of King William and Queen Anne. The dissolute side of his character and achievements is so typical of the circle in which he

moved as to make anything like precise delineation unremunerative as a contribution to personality. He was the first nobleman to greet the Prince of Orange on his landing in England ; he knew how to wriggle himself into the favour of Queen Anne. He used and abused the support of Marlborough. He enjoyed the literary society which gathered about Swift and Harley, and it was of him that the Dean wrote, " I loved the man, but I detest his memory," in allusion to a will, which in its utter disregard of the testator's family, bears more scathing witness to an abandoned character than could be provided in a complete catalogue of his illegitimate children and the circumstances in which they had been begotten. The word " father " in reference to this splendid patron of vice is an error in the use of language.

But apart from her existence as a mother, the Countess of Macclesfield is almost devoid of interest. Two years after her divorce she was looking from her window, when she saw a gentleman violently used by the bailiffs. Her compassion was aroused: she befriended him, and he married her. If, as her apologetic biographer assumes, she committed no further infidelities during the twenty-four years of her married life as Mrs. Brett, she made no corresponding demands on the conduct of her husband, whose affection, on at least one occasion, she discovered was extended to the maid as well as to the mistress. Nevertheless, once more she became a mother, and if the fate of her

other children was obscure, that of her new daughter was destined to be sadly conspicuous.

By the time Queen Anne was dead, Mrs. Brett was well past the middle age. The sorrow and the catastrophe of her first marriage and its immediate consequences had been effaced by the long passage of years, by new demands, new interests, new impressions. Far back in her mind lay the memory of the day when, only three years after her divorce, she heard that the Earl of Macclesfield was dead. It was Mohun, that lurid figure whose sword was always flashing in some fresh escapade, Mohun, the first friend of her first husband, the early associate of her dissolute lover, who had kept alive the memory of Macclesfield for nearly a dozen years after his death. The dispute between Mohun and the Duke of Hamilton over the title to the Earl of Macclesfield's estate had been a fertile subject for gossip in those years, gossip that turned into delighted horror and died when the two claimants had fought "like enraged lions" at the dawn of a November day in Hyde Park, and extinguished the quarrel only with their lives. It was but a few months since, in the summer of the same year, Lord Rivers had been succeeded by his cousin, a Catholic priest, who, in the years of their residence together, had been treated by his predecessor little better than a footman.

These persons repel us as we read of their violence and their vice, but we gather malicious consolation from the comparative brevity of their lives. The peerages

continue, but the peers die, some in their beds, some on the duelling ground. Anne Brett lives on.

If the spectre of those days of hiding and humiliation in Fox Court was at rest for her throughout the reign of Queen Anne, it began to stir soon after the death of that lady. Slowly and stealthily at first it moves, as if mistrustful of its own powers to terrify and persecute after that long slumber the woman who has passed unassailed from the thoughtless passions of twenty-five to the imperturbable security of fifty years of age. But with the continued exercise of its threatening mission it gains confidence, until at last, no longer crouching as it goes, treading no measured steps, but stalking rapidly in the full pride of its ominous shape, it clutches at the throat of its victim, and cries, hissing in her ear, "Mother, where is thy son?"

VII

To the youth who had chanced upon his discovery, its very singularity was a beacon to illumine the obscurity and the misery of his early years with a flash of sudden comprehension. From his childhood he had felt like an alien seeking vainly to make himself understood in a company of chattering foreigners. They were as English as he, but their thoughts travelled for ever, from early morning to late evening, in the dull paths of petty ambitions. Their gentility oppressed him like a nightmare, and at a very early age he had become sensible of their readiness to accept silently a nameless distinction between their outlook on life and his own. It takes so little to establish such a recognition; a look in the eye, or the involuntary raising of an eyebrow, and with an observant child the thing is done.

His thoughts moved in a different world from theirs. He dreamed of fleets and cities, of the sun amid fields of ripening corn, of all the colours of earth and sky, the majesty of morning and the dim wonder of night. If they dreamed at all, it was of freights and houses, the cost of bread, the probabilities of fine

or wet weather. For him a window was an opening through which to view the world, the beggar with his crutch, the lady in her chariot ; for them a place from which to bid a neighbour tradesman a good morning. His eyes brightened at the sight of gold lace on a coat and filled with tears at the sight of a shrivelled hand begging for alms. At times it would seem to him that the figures in his immediate environment lacked reality. In their solicitude for his welfare he suspected a kind of treachery. He felt a passionate desire for being alone. And when the satisfaction of it turned to loneliness, it was neither to his nurse nor to his godmother that he felt impelled to have recourse. It makes very little difference whether it is to be assumed that one of these women accustomed him to the convention of being regarded as her son. Even if one of them was in fact his mother, which will never be determined, the circumstance could not relieve the spiritual and intellectual isolation of a boy, who could not hope for comprehension by either of them. For him they cast shadows across his dreams, levelling the flights of a precocious imagination with the oppression of their everyday presence. To possess mother or father, or both, is no consolation to a child with eyes fixed on the eternal stars and an irrepressible longing to catch at them.

But the childhood passes into boyhood, and the stars begin to sink back into a fathomless sky ; the

vision even of the young turns earthward. With his condition he had more reason than ever to be dissatisfied. The inner conviction that his life was shadowed had grown with an attempt, which had failed, to remove him to the American plantations soon after his departure from a school either near or at St. Albans, in which he had passed several years. He now awoke to the full horror of his loveless condition. The affection of those who represented themselves as anxious for his welfare was a palpable sham. Not only was he friendless, but the object of some dark conspiracy which must be defeated. His intellectual superiority to those round him was something for which he was now to be punished. He was to be taught what a heinous sin it was to look down upon his station. Not that he said anything that might give pain, but he carried himself with an air that ill became a boy who would have to make his own living. He must be made not only to meet but also to honour this necessity. His liking for books was in itself a slight on the unlettered persons whom he neglected for these consoling companions. He found in things written an echo of the voice that struggled for utterance within himself, a confirmation of the belief that there was a world alive with the hopes and the passions so dear to him, so incomprehensible to the inmates of his home. His was a religious nature, striving to break through the mists of misunderstanding and persecution which gathered about his boyhood. The

attempt to transport him from the England he longed some day to study and to adorn, hurt him and made him alert to discover fresh designs for his destruction. He had friends, reckless companions for whom life, in this boy's fanciful mind, opened a banner bright with pleasing devices. The disparity of their situations from his attracted him. Wherever he went he became a centre of good company. There was something in his smile which captivated and puzzled those who encountered it for the first time. He confided his miseries to no one. They belonged to the silent hours when he tried to understand his own melancholy and the malevolent influences which he suspected to be at work around him.

What had he done that they should want to apprentice him to a shoemaker? Even while the project was discussed he was wrapped in an ecstasy. It was as if he heard a fanfare of trumpets, no less sweetly clear for its remoteness, heralding the triumph of his imagination over all the littleness of his condition. For a short time, however, he consented to be employed with a shoemaker in Holborn, deriving ironical satisfaction from this novel masquerade, although it wounded his pride to think such an indignity should be thrust upon him.

Suddenly the cobbler's shop and the degrading influences of his childhood, the obscurity, the misery, the doubt, vanished with almost theatrical rapidity from his life. Like some gold-digger who has

resolutely refused to be disturbed by the grey monotony of the soil in which he has laboured, constantly preoccupied with the anticipation of the moment when the first streak of the bright metal should shine upon him, he had fixed his vision above the common things of life, a steadfast believer in dreams and the coming of the unexpected.

Many persons who have believed in miracles have suffered the fate of appearing to posterity in the light of impostors. Here was no miracle, but a story to a belief in which this young man's whole temperament and experience lent strength. How he came by it matters little. He may have been a willing dupe. That he was a deliberate charlatan, inventing a trick by which to hoodwink mankind and exalt himself, is, in the light of what follows, a thing hardly to be conceived. Documents can be forged, but the laws of human character cannot be adjusted in order to fit in with the nice conclusions of antiquarian research. This youth had spent his early life in an alien atmosphere. It had no more been in his power to escape entirely from it, than to suffer the fire within him to be suffocated by it. Redemption offered itself to him in the whole-hearted acceptance of a discovery which placed him in a romantic light. His whole nature vibrated to the influence of romance. It is not only in books that the amazing element in life presents itself. Jack Sheppard was a living person who swung by the neck

long before the novelist pinned the ribands of fiction about the highwayman's memory.

Our youth, nameless until now, for the name that he bore until his enlightenment is irrecoverably lost, found himself a person of noble, if irregular, origin. True, he was even now no more than the derelict cast up from the wreck of a scandal dead these twenty years ; but a light still played over the waves in which the vessel foundered, tempting, luring him to drift in their direction. He was Richard, son of Richard Savage, the late Earl Rivers. The other Earl, too, was dead, the fierce husband from whom his mother, so he figured it, was driven to fly. That he should be an illegitimate child caused no pang of sorrow or anxiety. On the contrary, the fact seemed to magnify for him the burning discovery that he had a mother who was alive. The blood sang in his veins when he thought of her. A tenderness rushed upon him with novel and overwhelming force. He saw her beautified by the passion and the pain which had given him his being. He blessed the title to eccentricity conferred upon him in the circumstances of his birth. It was as if until now he had been struggling through heavy mist up a mountain-side, urged by a force as mysterious as it was irresistible, to climb to the top. Now he stood with the mist below him, breathless, exultant. Had he suddenly found himself in possession of some stately abbey together with the wealth of Indies, he could not have been

more enchanted with the prospect. The narrow workshop of the cobbler in which he worked, the strips of hide, the awl, for the first time seemed full of meaning when the irrelevance of his own association with them was established. They made up the appointed scene of squalor and penury from which he was to emerge into a new and undisputed rank of life.

And he longed to meet his mother, to hear her voice, to touch her hand, in a moment of unspeakable joy to efface the hardness of the past. When he sought to picture this scene of his home-coming, the power of raising images which at other times and in other meditations mounted so nimbly and to such heights in this poet's brain, deserted him, left him helpless, groping on hands and knees, as it were, in a dark chamber of which he could not even feel the confines.

When suspense was no longer endurable, he wrote to her. Who could it be that stayed a mother's hand from writing an answer to her son? Possibly her knowledge of the servitude to which he was attached made it difficult for her to enter into communication with him. The figure of her husband (had not her husband been her ruin?) appeared in a threatening light as if intervening between the mother and the son. How could a lady take any steps to acknowledge a cobbler son? Did he not owe it to himself, since his discovery, to break finally

with such an association? Coffee-houses were the places for a wit and a gentleman. He must learn something of this Colonel Brett.

So it came that he left the shoemaker in Holborn, and devoted the whole of his time and ingenuity to the compassing of an interview with his mother. To this end those who had imparted to him the knowledge of her existence were powerless to help him. But every fresh obstacle provided him with a new incentive. Reluctant at first to importune her with repeated letters, he found himself compelled before long to appeal to her charity. How could he tell whether his letters were duly delivered to her? The miscarriage of letters was frequent. From the restrained dignity of his first written address to her, he now passed to a naked appeal for the means of subsistence. Notwithstanding the urgency, the obvious sincerity of his demands, they met with no response. Of her affection for him when once she should know of his existence and the perplexities in which he was involved, he never entertained a doubt. Ever since his birth, persons and interests had conspired to keep him apart from her. But not her person, not her interest! In the fevered nights of suspense which succeeded to his daily endeavour to come at her, he whispered again and again to himself, "Mother!" and fancied the voice of one crying faintly like an imprisoned echo, the words "My son!"

Little by little the strange cause of a distress

which made itself visible even on a face of an habitually melancholy cast, was disclosed to his friends. By their kindness he was temporarily relieved from immediate want. The nature of his story placed him, for them, at a singular elevation, added a zest to their loyalty, enlarged the charm of his presence into something that courted curiosity and compelled wonder. It was no difficult matter to gather some particulars of Colonel Brett. For years he had been a familiar figure at Button's. Was it not said that he had provided Sir Richard Steele with his character of Colonel Rambler in *The Tatler*? An amiable, rather idle man who loved the playhouse and the company of the wits better than public office and the ingratitude of his country. Nobody knew anything about the character of his lady. It was strange that this woman should contrive to be so inaccessible.

But this son in quest of a mother was not to be turned from his purpose. Whatever might be her motives for concealment, they would break down under a stroke of nature. All the heightened interest aroused by the disclosure of his identity to his friends could not make up for the simple, the overwhelming satisfaction of seeing her. It was to this that the whole development of his life tended. Development in any other direction was impossible. It might be advisable to conceal his relations with her from publicity. He was entirely ready to make the sacrifice. But his claim to be admitted into her presence was

incontestable, the common right of every innocent son to say good morning to his mother. What passage of time could rob him of this? Since his letters, or perhaps hers in reply to him, were intercepted, he would go to her quietly, submissively, like a child expectant but in no way fearful of a tender rebuke for an indiscretion.

But he came no farther than the threshold of her door. The instructions imparted to her servants had been precise. From the tone in which they were delivered they must have been peremptory. When the door closed upon him, he felt as if some one had struck him, some one who but a moment before had stooped over him in an attitude of inexpressible tenderness. He looked furtively down the street. In the agony of his humiliation he would have deemed it in no way extraordinary if from every direction in which he could look, people had rushed upon him with drawn swords.

VIII

No one has ever dodged the historian with completer success than Anne Brett, once Countess of Macclesfield. She survives the most complicated situations only in the statements of others. What she did when suddenly confronted with the demands made by this living claimant to her support and her affection cannot be told. With resolute indifference to what might then or subsequently be inferred from her conduct, she did not admit him to her presence and she did not answer his communications. Perhaps she was as convinced of her inability to invalidate his claim by substantial evidence, as she was certain that this was not the Richard Smith of Fox Court, Gray's Inn Lane. Perhaps she was content to thrust the burden of proof upon one who she had good reason to believe, or at least to fear, was her son. More than ever she had been Countess of Macclesfield she was now Mrs. Brett with a husband and a daughter, and she can have felt no desire to enlarge the family circle by the introduction of another member. The most prudent course was to do nothing. It is legitimate to assume that she possessed the virtue of patience and that she was not easily frightened.

She had proved herself long ago an adept in the art of procrastination. She could wait.

She could wait, but all the waiting and all the silence could not stifle the yearning for recognition in this Richard's soul. To go back, was for him an impossibility. Everything beckoned him onwards. The reality of his past surroundings had slipped from him like a loose cloak hung upon alien shoulders. Like some traveller who has come to a halt by nightfall in a new world, he stood facing the starlit sky, and peered desperately at the storm-clouds gathering in the distance. If these stars were taking an evil course for him, he would disdain to look away from them. Their configuration should burn itself into his brain with gazing. Life was made up of many, many years, and what was this but the dark passage of a few hours? She was a mother, had seen the infant smile upon her breast. Once he had looked up into those eyes withheld now so steadfastly from his. And the weight of this memory, for all the child's oblivion, must rest upon her still. Slowly but with inevitable force it would draw her down, down from the fancied security of that pitiless silence, until, wearied into nature's sweet utterance, she would sink with a cry into his arms. When evening stole upon the city he made his way to the street in which she lived. For hours he paced up and down before her house, praying that some accident would bring her to the window or that he might

catch a glimpse of her features as she crossed her room with a candle in her hand.

Night after night he stood thus on the tiptoe of expectation, saw the lights spring up behind her windows, and pictured her moving gravely in some gay company. Could she but know the little distance that lay between them, how that heart would leap! There was no rebellion in his soul at the cruelty of those who were keeping her from him. When he thought of them, it was with curious pity, as if before his wondering eyes there passed some monstrous procession of savage creatures killing and cursing in strange jargon as they went. Compared with these, even the beasts of the field had human nature, for even if they knew not sorrow they cared for their young. In man or woman inhumanity was a madness calling for compassion, not indignation.

Although the intensity of his suffering was new to him—for what was the hardness of his early life in comparison with what seemed like the repeated touch of an uncommonly fine whip on a wounded heart?—he bore it well. Soon the end must come. Some one among the sentinels who guarded her so vigilantly would slumber at his post. There were nights when he would go three and four times to her house in the hope of finding some unexpected way into her presence. Could he not come at her on her way to her chariot? When once the shock of the encounter was over, she would yield to his entreaties,

take him in with her, and as they drove through the city side by side, this son would make her feel what this discovery meant for him, this sudden miraculous flowering of affection in the desert of his life.

Coaches stopped again and again at her door. At sight of each fresh one, the vain hope fluttered in him. Full need he had of the darkness to cover his thin, restless figure and watchful eyes, wide with the want of sleep and this perpetual staring. Appearances less strange than his could not have failed to arouse suspicion in a street by daylight. But no one saw him. Every window in the front of that house came to acquire for him the significance of a living thing, growing deeper with familiarity. Never before had he experienced the obsession of a place. For him the real world lay not in the city with its throngs, not in the solitude of the garret to which he climbed, but behind the door which had been closed so rudely on him, in the company of the one longed presence which so obstinately denied itself to him. When, when would something happen to tear the tight mask from this mother's face and disclose to his beatified vision the tenderness of the features behind it?

One evening as he was walking past her door, he found it open and the passage empty. Empty, too, was the staircase leading to the chambers above. In a moment his feet had crossed the threshold. Swiftly, silently he passed upstairs. The rapidity of his move-

ment left him scant of breath, and his heart beat violently with the near prospect of the meeting. At last she was within speaking distance of him. Trembling with excitement, heedless of all consequences, he turned the handle of a door and was about to go in, when he turned as if made mysteriously aware that some one was behind him. For a moment he stood looking at her, speechless. A mist gathered in his eyes. He tried to kneel before her, but feared to fall, and with outstretched hands swayed to and fro in an agony of supplication.

Her voice fell sharply on his ears, the voice of a startled, terrified woman, entreating him instantly to begone. He sought to excuse himself for the rashness of his intrusion, but his words came heavily, clumsily, as hers turned from entreaty into command

As well might she have commanded the Thames to flow backwards. Her opposition loosed his tongue, and the whole passion of his nature exploded in a speech of which the words tumbled helter-skelter in sentences broken by tears. Suddenly it seemed as if her life had been placed in imminent danger. A crowd of her servants gathered about her. He heard her order his removal, became aware that she had uttered a charge which stabbed him like a knife. He looked at her as if in doubt whether he could have heard aright. But her condition precluded all explanation. In place of the mother whose benediction he had besought, he saw a figure more nearly re-

scribing one of the Furies than he could ever have expected to meet in flesh and blood. It needed no evidence to make him certain. The hatred in her eyes was enough.

Once more on the street, he had to repeat to himself the substance of his accusation before he could persuade himself to face its necessity. The street, or rather the place of presence, had been transformed by the horror of his experience into a place of menace from which he felt like one pursued. She had accused him before her own servants of an intent to murder her. The son had been accused of an attempt to murder his own mother! Why had they not summoned the watch and had him duly arrested on the formal charge? He laughed at the strangeness of his predicament, but the sense of irony was swiftly overthrown by the awe of outraged nature. Why had she not murdered him? That crime would have been trivial in comparison with the other. Surely it was a little thing to take the life from the body. But she had killed a principle in nature, cruelly murdered her own son's faith in motherhood. The very dimensions of the world were strained at breaking point for the man who had been born loved, to believe it could contain a thing so monstrous.

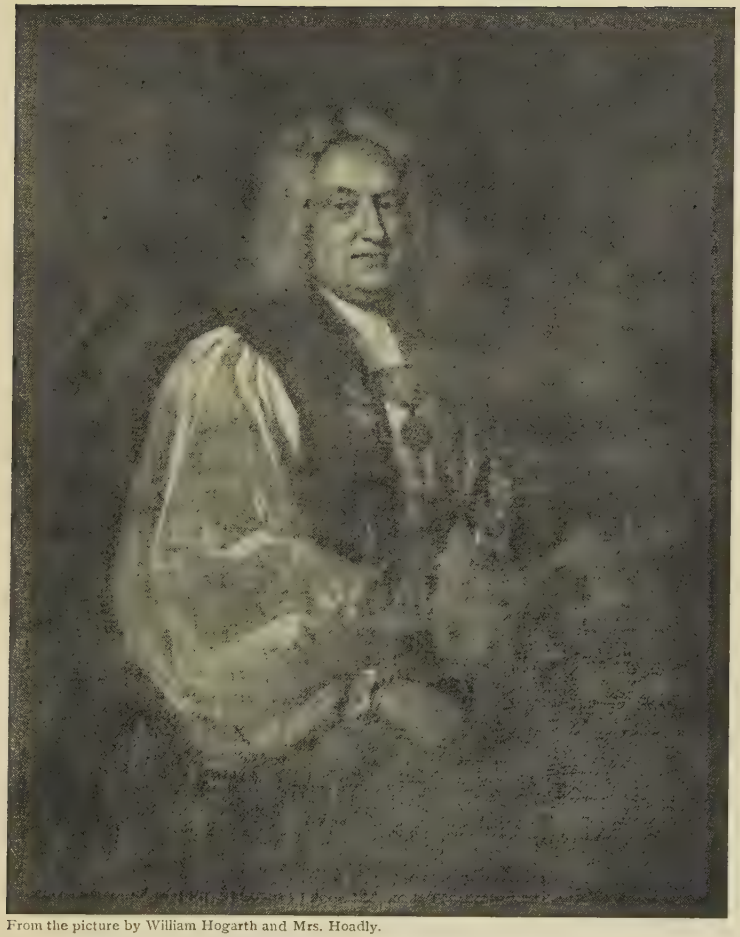
The suddenness of his appearance to her had been [illegible], something in the manner of his address

must have let loose the tempest of passion in her soul. Yet he was sensible of the persuasive element in his own personality. Men and women yielded to it in whatever company he presented himself. Was she alone, linked to him by the nearest ties of blood, able to resist that influence? Able to resist! Some vagrant leper begging for alms at her door would have had sweeter welcome. No doubt of the validity of his title to her affection arose to relieve the misery of what he had gone through. More than ever he felt that she belonged to him, was part of the strange heritage bequeathed to him; a heritage which it must be his business to understand and improve. Others might accept their lives in spiritless indifference to the whole mystery of being, pursue their daily tasks, gyrate comfortably, each in his little circle untroubled by the whole of which they formed some little part. Upon him had been thrust that unique distinction of being son to such a mother, lifting him to perilous altitudes of speculation from which he could view the world stretched far below him in boundless variety of design. In his mind made itself keenly perceptible the eternal division between those who figure like blind actors on a universal stage, and those who from dawn to sunset, from the outset to the close of a conscious life, play the unwearying part of spectators.

IX

He became a spectator, questioning, watching, criticising, wondering at all that he was, all that he saw and heard. The accession of George the First, with its immediate consequences, provided something at once lively and grotesque to look at. The face of the country was twisted into queer grimaces of loyalty, obedience, servility to the régime of the amazing Hanoverian. But although the last of the Stewarts was dead and the Pretender was across the water, many persons were by no means content to sit down to the new fare of German sausages and Whig principles without a protest. It was all very well and very wise to spill blood at the faintest whisper of papistical dispositions, but there was a difference between the treasonable acceptation of the Pope as spiritual head of the Church and the admission of Benjamin Hoadly's revolutionary utterances when, as Bishop of Bangor and chaplain to the new King, he preached before His Majesty a sermon all common sense and no theology.

As it chanced to be the smart thing as well as the right thing to do, our young spectator exercised his



From the picture by William Hogarth and Mrs. Hoadly.

BENJAMIN HOADLY, BISHOP OF BANGOR.

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wit on a poem satirising the controversy in a manner clearly unfavourable to the Bishop. *The Convocation: or, a Battle of Pamphlets*, does not, however, represent his first attempt to attract popular notice, for in the year before its issue he had hoped for public recognition as the author of *Woman's a Riddle*, a play produced in the December of 1716 at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre. Mr. Bullock, the actor to whose interest he had owed its representation, had proved himself to be no less acute as a man of business than he was acknowledged to be brilliant as a comedian. This man had the supreme art of looking a fool in a farce and taking in cleverer men than himself in real life. Boy authors could not expect to leap from the street upon the stage: here was an author little more than a boy, with a plot suggested by an English lady from a Spanish play: the adaptation needed alterations such as could only be made by a person of experience. The argument of experience has always been used by unscrupulous persons to damp the ardour of youthful ambition. Mr. Bullock was successful in dispossessing the author of any share in the profits of the play. Most likely he employed the familiar device of suggesting that it would be certain to involve a financial loss. Possibly in the course of his negotiations with the author he contrived to act himself into the belief that it was a very poor play and needed a very rich act of condescension in any one to put it upon the stage.

Neither the performance of this comedy nor the

publication of the poem on the Bangorian controversy excited curiosity about the author. Nevertheless the direction of his career was settled. A man who has prospects either of inheritance or the pursuit of a lucrative trade may hesitate before committing himself, even with high literary impulses, to the profession of literature. But where no prospects of any other kind claim consideration, where life in itself is of necessity adventure and the passion for delineation runs high, the ability to choose an occupation has indeed dwindled to nothing. He had tasted the pleasure of versifying ; he had come closely enough in contact with the theatre to catch easily the fashionable malady, not of acting, but of writing speeches and scenes for the players. His own follies and excesses, besides those of his companions, were made at once more pardonable in the eyes of the world and perhaps less pardonable in his own by something like accurate reflexion in satirical comedies for the stage. And there was another incentive which spurred him in the same direction. Since the appeal to nature left his mother preternaturally cold, what of the appeal to art ? Her husband had an interest in the patent of the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, was well known to the highly esteemed Mr. Addison. It was one thing to burst in upon a lady, like a beggar from the street, another to appear as author of some play that was the talk of the town, quoted by wits, stamped with the applause of her own circle. She

might thrust him from her door, but she could not prevent his fame from flying in at her window.

Not only should his next play be acted, but also it should be printed, and on the title page should appear the name of the author, Richard Savage, son of the late Earl Rivers. Gossip would do the rest. His pride exulted in the thought of emerging from the humiliation of private obscurity and contempt into the high light of a public triumph. It was characteristic rather than wise of the satirist of the Bishop of Bangor to choose for his patron George Granville, who had but recently been released from a two years' sojourn in the Tower, to which he had been committed on suspicion of complicity in the rebellion of 1715. But Granville was an illustrious figure, and attracted the youthful writer all the more for the shadows which had closed about all the eminent Tories on the accession of King George. Alexander Pope had called him "the polite" and dedicated to him his poem on "Windsor Forest"; and in addition to a wide reputation for elegant manners, Granville was himself esteemed as the author of many dramatic pieces.

Mr. Richard Savage chose his subject again from a Spanish play. The scene was Valencia, the persons men and women of fashion engaged in amorous intrigue, the title "Love in a Veil." Sir Charles Winlove, an English gentleman escaped from Madrid after killing his rival in love, passes through a series of sprightly adventures. "Lookee, Madam," says he, when no

longer able to forbear expressing indignation at his ill-usage by a lady, "I am not so romantic as to die for the sake of being read in a novel to divert girls in the green sickness. My intention is to live for the end I was created, to propagate my generation." The antiquity of this sentiment is less respectable than the freshness of its expression in language which so neatly sums up the typical rake in the typical play of the period. *Love in a Veil* was performed at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane in the summer of 1718. The time of year was unfavourable to anything like conspicuous success, but in spite of some adroitness and the constant quality of what would nowadays be called cocksureness in the writing of the dialogues, there was nothing in the play to command more than moderate applause. Of little consequence to his literary reputation, it was, however, a means of introducing him to the notice of Mr. Robert Wilks, an actor of the middle age renowned for a singular talent in representing the graces of nature. Wilks was as chivalrous to persons in distress as he was quick to detect distinction in manners. Here was a young man who, when he doffed his hat and placed it under his arm, left the critic speechless, for the action was as perfect as the bow which followed it.

On Sir Richard Steele, as on Wilks, young Savage made a highly favourable impression. Steele was the right man to make a pretty speech on a painful situation. "It ought to be the care of all in whose power it lies,"

said he, "to lift Mr. Savage above a sense of his mother's cruelty ; because a misery so undeserved has entitled him to a right of finding every good man his father." Miscellaneous paternity constituted a part of this amiable gentleman's own experience as well as of his faith. Amiable, affectionate, wayward, wild —such are a few of the epithets devoted to his certainly pious memory by one who spoke and wrote of him with a kind of helpless pity more than a century after he died. Impecunious was the epithet that rose at him and smote him down again and again in the course of his splendid, pitiful life. He was an incurable talker, the best of companions, perhaps the worst for any youth in Savage's condition and with Savage's qualities. Under that merry, reckless guidance the young man became familiar with the many shifts to which those are reduced who live without due regard to the resources at their command. If Steele was improvident, he had at least some means beyond which to live, in his careless fashion. Savage had none.

Early one morning, in accordance with an arrangement made the day before, Savage appeared at Sir Richard's door, where he found his host awaiting him in his chariot. They were driven as briskly as the horses could take them to a mean tavern at Hyde Park Corner. On alighting they retired to a private room. For the first time now the object of the expedition was disclosed to Savage. He was to aid

his patron in writing a pamphlet. The two Richards worked until dinner was put upon the table, a sorry meal for any one accustomed to the splendour of Steele's table. Savage ventured to ask for wine. The Knight hesitated, but at last and with some reluctance ordered it to be brought. When the meal was finished, they proceeded in their work until it was in a state fit for publication. Savage rose to go, but Sir Richard plucked him gently by the sleeve ; only the first part of his task was at an end. There was no money to pay the reckoning ; the second part was, to find a buyer for the pamphlet. Patiently the elder man waited until his young friend reappeared with two guineas. He had retired for the day from his house only to avoid his creditors.

Savage took no warning from such experiences. If such paths led to perdition he could tread them as blithely as any other, and in Steele he found a man whose mind swayed in an exquisite balance between dismay at the imminent consequences of a scrape, and merriment at the discovery of some fresh device for evading them. The man carried the masquerade of theatrical invention right into the grand dining-room of his private house in Bloomsbury Square. Here, on one occasion, he entertained a party of noble guests of whom one, inspired by a liberal allowance of wine to an outburst of candour, asked his host how he could afford to keep so many liveried servants. So far from resenting the familiarity of the question, Sir

After the picture by Sir Godfrey Kneller.

SIR RICHARD STEELE.

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Richard replied with equal frankness that these were bailiffs who had entered with a writ of execution, and that as he was unable to expel them, he was determined they should do him credit while they stayed. So grateful were the company for this unexpected entertainment, that they paid their host's debt after extorting from him a promise that in future he would dispense with such retinue altogether.

But if in his own affairs Steele communicated his follies without reserve to his young companion, there were moments when he reflected seriously on the misfortunes of one who had become dear to him. The very exposure of his own failings was indeed offered in the spirit of an invitation to avoid imitating them. He had a keen memory of his own youth; sometimes the uncertainty of what old age would bring, crept nearer to his thoughts than to many a graver man's at a time of life no more advanced. Then the wings of a tender melancholy would brush lightly the serene surface of his constitutional merriment; the swift sadness in those roguish eyes, the half-uttered jest, bespoke the changed mood. Wistfully he would glance at Savage. Such cruelty in a mother, nay in a parent, was an outrage on human nature.

Steele, too, had a child out of wedlock, a daughter whom he loved and whom his wife loved too. How if she could blot out the memory of the other woman from that blighted life? He would have liked

Savage for a son-in-law. At first he broached the matter lightly enough, and then grew more serious as he enlarged upon the blessings of matrimony and the constant companionship of a good woman. Nor did this impractical father forget the practical aspect of what he was proposing. He would start these young people with a thousand pounds. What did a laced coat or two the less matter to him? Had he not his large black-buckled periwig to sell in case of sore need? Or his chariot and horses? He had no further use for finery, no right to it. Youth must go gay, but middle age? A few sacrifices would do him good.

Thus he prattled, but whenever he sought to make an occasion for bringing the two together, Savage evaded him. The wild youth had no thought to marry, could not even face the prospect of any meeting convened for so dull a purpose; his pride rose at the idea of bending to benevolence, suffering direction in so personal a matter from one who had heaped benefits upon him. The critical faculty in him sometimes dozed but hardly ever slept. An older man might well have put a curb upon its active exercise in such a situation. But Savage loved license, and was quick to suspect attempts at his liberty. He began to distinguish something ridiculous in the frequency with which Sir Richard came back again and again to his pet scheme. Possessing the treacherous gift of mimicry, he was lured into exercising it

one day at Steele's expense for the edification of Mr. Edmund Curll, who sold books and patent medicines from his shop in Paternoster Row. Curll was a dangerous gossip, and by the time the story of Savage's mimic fit reached the ears of Steele it bore an appearance of unforgivable malice. The wound was all the deeper for the tenderness of the heart which received it. Such conduct in one whom he had befriended, whose youth and condition had been an open passport to affectionate confidence, needed no explanation for Steele. It was too painfully clear. The link that bound him to Savage had been snapped. No words, no deed could put the pieces together.

X

The life of Curll the publisher would make an interesting, if sinister book. He was a most valuable acquaintance for a young man of literary aspirations. He had quarrelled with Pope and been publicly reviled by Defoe. He was a pirate, a brisk trader in libel and pornography, a publisher of masterpieces, and an admirable judge of the theatre. He had a personal preference for vice, but no prejudice against virtue. He knew how to extract profit from the littleness as well as from the greatness of great men. He understood the art of vituperation and honoured its masters. He could exploit personalities.

In Savage he was quick to recognise a creature whose conversation and company were destined to carry him into the centre of a circle of poets, wits, and noblemen whom it was a publisher's business to court. The sooner Savage reached the centre of that circle, the better for him, and the better possibly for Curll. He was young, had already won a title to publicity through his plays, and a few lines on his misfortunes would be certain to stimulate the interest already displayed by a curious public in *The Poetical*

Register, a publication which gave entertaining particulars concerning the lives and characters of the English dramatic poets. At this early stage in his literary career, Savage could only feel flattered at being placed among the eminent poets chosen for representation by the editor. To a young man of high ambitions, to be with the great comes so near to being of the great as often entirely to obliterate the difference. Not that Savage was unduly vain of what he had so far written, but with the greatest of his superiors he shared the passion for applause.

In 1719 then, many people who had never before heard of Mr. Richard Savage were reading a brief account of who he was and what he had done, in Curll's biographical sheet. Those few lines were certainly well designed to arouse curiosity. After a cold statement exposing his ill-starred parentage and the names of his father and mother, it was further added that Lord Rivers had been deceived by a false report of his son's death, and so prevented from making liberal provision for him in his will ; that the boy's education was owing, not to his mother, but to her mother the Lady Mason, who had committed him to the care of his godmother Mrs. Lloyd. This lady, it was stated, had died before her godson was ten years old. She had left him a legacy of three hundred pounds, but the money had been embezzled by her executors : in spite of these misfortunes he had displayed a genius for dramatic study in two

comedies. The names of these were given, as well as of the persons to whom they were dedicated and of the places in which they were performed.

Possibly Savage himself wrote this account; probably he supplied some of the particulars, if not all; whatever he may have supplied must have been originally conveyed to him through a medium—whether of persons or documents—of which he accepted the good faith. In any case the accuracy or inaccuracy of the account can have been of little moment in comparison with the fact that it marked a transition in his career. He was no longer to see himself a solitary individual in the concentrated light of his inner misfortunes, but as a character dressed in the purple and rags of publicity, now covered up beyond the possibility of recognising the man inside the clothes, now partially exposed in a grotesque showing of the body through the tissue of a biographer's embroidery. He was no longer one Richard, the Richard of his own conception, but many Richards, the Richards of all the brains of every condition, from sobriety to high fever, on which his story impressed itself. The significant fact remains the same, whether we figure him standing by the pool of fame and throwing with his own hand the first pebble to ruffle its surface, or whether we see him absorbed in contemplating the wide-spreading ripple caused by the same missile from another hand; he assisted at the birth of a second personality which in its turn was to father many others, as his character

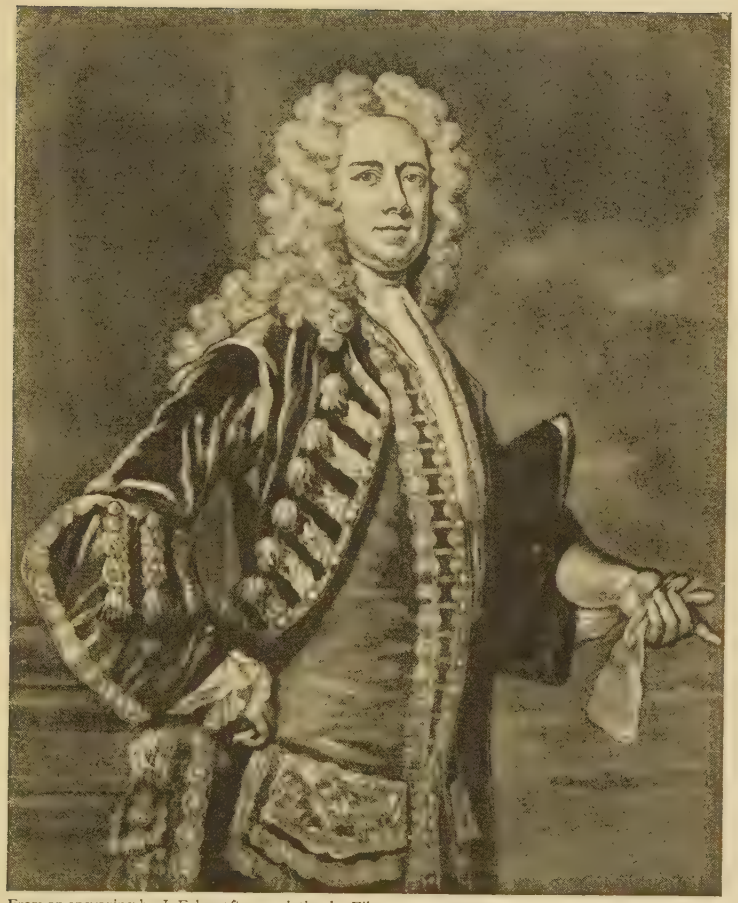
passed through a succession of varying printed accounts into the public mind.

But to provide the gossips at the coffee-houses with a topic of conversation, while it enlarged Savage's opportunities of living on the hospitality of others, was no efficient substitute for earning, or at least receiving, a livelihood. The unfortunate issue of his friendship with Steele now drove him more frequently into the company of Wilks, who from the first had looked upon him with favour and compassion. The actor could not understand how Mrs. Brett, or indeed any woman, could refuse Savage anything for which he asked. Why, the mere presence of the man involved capitulation ; his engaging softness of manner invited a closer acquaintance with the strength of emotion which underlay it. The involuntary nature of his politeness communicated to it a quality of tender regard for those on whom it was practised. He had dignity, wit, a smile that would turn a vote in an election. There was music, besides melancholy, in the low tones of his voice.

The kindness of Wilks was no merely sentimental luxury. He was a man in love with distress, one of the rare men who, once poor themselves, are never tired of contemplating misfortune and seeking some active means to relieve it. If Mrs. Brett was deaf to the entreaties of Savage, how would she regard an application from himself? His chance of success in his mission was all the greater for the light-hearted way

in which it was easy for him to conduct it. With a master in comedy she would be allowed no opportunity of striking the postures of tragedy. She was a woman of the world, and no Hecuba. There should be no high words, no flashing eyes and gathering up of robes; but a gentle conversation, superficially gay, such as two gentlemen of fashion might pursue across the card-table, or at White's Chocolate House on a fine May morning.

Mrs. Brett needed no persuasion to receive a visit from an actor of Mr. Wilks's eminence. His letter begging permission for an appointment set her thinking of his delightful impersonation of Sir Charles Easy in Colley Cibber's *Careless Husband.* That was many years ago, but there were good reasons for the brilliance of the performance remaining undimmed in her memory. Not only had the town been enchanted with Anne Oldfield (then a mere girl) as Lady Betty Modish, but also Mrs. Brett herself had contributed to the brilliance of the comedy by suggesting to the author a scene based on her own experience. Entering a room in her house one day she had discovered her maid asleep in a chair, and opposite, her husband in a similar condition with his periwig by his side. Her only comment on the situation had been to tie her Steinkirk scarf over the Colonel's head without disturbing him. Colley Cibber had been enchanted with the proposal of a scene so likely to divert an audience, and his expectations had not been dis-



From an engraving by J. Faber after a painting by Ellys.

ROBERT WILKS.

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appointed. He was right in believing Mrs. Brett to be an excellent judge of stage matters, and he frequently consulted her afterwards in composing his plays. The careless Colonel was too easy to resent such a good joke at his own expense.

If Savage's experience as a dramatic author had given him little enough excuse for anticipating success in this department of writing, his choice of companions, or, perhaps, their choice of him, had been fortunate in bringing him into the notice of the Bretts. The quarrel with Steele was a pity. Who could say how far it might increase the difficulty for Wilks in obtaining some favour for the young gentleman? But Steele had no malice, and most likely would treat the whole matter in aggrieved silence. Possibly Wilks might even help the two Richards to a reconciliation. He had acted in Steele's plays, and the temperaments of the two men had much in common.

Mrs. Brett was not prepared for the appeal which the actor made to her charity. But Wilks had prepared himself with the utmost foresight for the interview. If Savage himself could not plead his poverty as an excuse for mercy, another person could. Moreover, what need was there to disclose the name of his friend, until the lady had granted his request? The cunning actor smiled to himself when he was once more alone after a visit that had needed all his skill to be guided to a successful issue. It had been easy in the luxury which surrounded them as they

talked, to hint at a sordid comparison, mean lodgings, coarse food, if any—above all, the chance gaiety that might come to an exalted mind (like some divine gift defying explanation), suffocated each day in the care for the morrow. Then, fearful of leading her in too mournful a direction, he had turned rapidly to the bright picture of distress relieved, an anecdote in illustration from his own youth—a hundred pounds from a friend at a moment when no speck of blue was in his heaven ; the rapture, the inextinguishable memory of the day, the hour, when the money came. Up went his hat into the air to give her a notion of what this had meant, as if the schoolboy were suddenly set free on a boundless holiday. Even to tell the story was to grow young again. Oh that he had the power to help this friend ! How his hand would fly to his pocket ! But if he lacked this power, did he not possess the privilege of flying to another's pocket, not like a thief by night but in the broad daylight of universal compassion, which he hesitated not to implore in so deserving a case ?

She had been overtaken by this voluble outburst, and expressed her readiness to help : she would give him double the amount he himself had received from that generous friend ; fifty pounds he should carry away with him now, the rest should be paid in instalments as it came to her from her South Sea Stock. His eyes bespoke his gratitude, but, on handing him the money, she had been quick to detect his embarrass-

ment, when the question came at last, Who was this oppressed young man in whose behalf he had pleaded so eloquently? How she had started, when he had told her! In a moment her whole demeanour had changed from benevolence to anger and suspicion: Mr. Wilks must have been put upon to extort this from her: this man was not her son.

He had seen his advantage and been quick to pursue it. The claim of mercy was larger than the claim of blood. He was no hireling in the pay of another: this was no errand of extortion but of entreaty. Could she deny the generous instinct which had prompted her to give, check in mid-career the flow of her pity for a poor creature at the mere sound of a name? With outstretched hand he had tendered to her the money she had brought him. The action had been impatient, an inspiration of the moment. With equal impatience, and with an air of injured pride, she had turned from him.

He had no wish to prolong his visit, and begged formally to take his leave. His parting glance at her had left upon him an impression of a woman holding back the tide of passion rising within her, the habitual vivacity of her mien petrified into a calm that seemed almost supernatural.

XI

Every fresh instance of Mrs. Brett's mysterious attitude towards Savage's claim made it easier for the young man to accept life as an adventure, and more difficult to face it as a practical matter with which to reckon. If he was in fact not her son, if even she was genuinely convinced, apart altogether from the truth of his claim, that he was an impostor, common prudence would have led her to refuse him all assistance. More than this, a fearless woman would have taken steps to silence the public assertion of a grave libel. Why should any faith be placed in her private denial? Had she not persisted in denying her motherhood altogether until the occasion for her expressing herself on the subject had been altogether removed by the decree of the House of Lords?

Savage could not know the lengths to which her attempt at evading the consequences of her intrigue with Lord Rivers had carried her. But Mrs. Pheasant had told the Ecclesiastical Court how my Lady had confided to her the counsel of her friends in the event of her being discovered to have had a child. This was, to give out that Lord Macclesfield had met her in the streets and carried her to a tavern. If

paternity was established, the innocent husband should at least be saddled with it. Certain it is, at all events, that in this story the element of imposture begins not with Richard Savage, but with Anne, Countess of Macclesfield. If Savage allowed an element of imposture to creep into representations of his story, in some instances even countenanced it, he would indeed appear in more senses than one to have been the natural son of such a mother.

He was now a desperado with fifty pounds. But what were fifty pounds to a man with imagination? They would hardly cover the cost of Steele's periwig, and Savage was quite as fond of splendour as his once amiable patron, and even less able to pay for it. Mrs. Brett's allowance was to have been provided out of the South Sea Fund in which the lady had shares, but in 1720 that colossal attempt to run the nation's finances like a shop, collapsed in ruins that have become so historical that nobody, except the historian, is any longer interested in looking at them. It was only fitting that the promises made to a mere poet should evaporate on the pricking of this bubble. Compassion was at a premium for the hardworking fathers of families beggared for no fault of their own. Poets had always starved, but the industrial classes, the credit of the country! Mrs. Brett could afford her losses, but not the luxury of paying out of her private fortune a hundred and fifty pounds which she had expected to net from speculation. Perhaps the

skill with which Mr. Wilks had extracted her promise still rankled. In any case, Savage received no more.

To rob an artist of all regular means of subsistence has always been the best way to confirm him in a belief in his own distinction ; and there is more likelihood of a prosperous merchant turning poet when suddenly confronted with abject poverty, than of the poet in similar straits turning to trade for a livelihood. For those who have once stroked the lyre of the muse, the more material the need, the more immaterial the aspiration. The guardians of Savage's boyhood destined him for a cobbler's shop ; the boy himself aspired to a seat on Parnassus.

The friendship of Wilks secured him a seat at the playhouse with every new performance, an equipment well befitting one whom the Duke of Dorset had been good enough to call an "injured nobleman." He enjoyed every opportunity of studying the stage. The comedies of fashionable intrigue ruffled his sense of humour amiably enough, but he longed to sound a deeper note. He had the passion for colour and imagery belonging to poets of an earlier century. His first two comedies had been concessions to the age in which he lived. His first tragedy, his last work for the theatre, affords a deeper insight into the peculiar pleasures he derived from the handling of words. He was still young, still at the time of initiation into the mysterious processes by which literature is evolved. He was pinched by such a

poverty as suffocates the ordinary man or turns him into a criminal.

For Savage each day with all its necessities, its pains, its hazards, provided thoughts, ideas, passions, griefs which he could use in the development of his characters. In imagination he clad himself in the garb of Sir Thomas Overbury, who in the reign of James the First fell a victim to the designs of the Countess of Somerset and met his death by poison. In Overbury he drew the stout advocate of virtue pursued by love for his friend and hatred of the woman by whom that friend is beguiled headlong into the gulf of tragedy. The contrast of good and evil in the characters of Overbury and the Countess became so violent in his pourtrayal as to be almost ridiculous; but Savage himself had experienced, or thought he had experienced, so much evil in a woman that it was natural for him to exaggerate. Did he not owe his present want to a woman? To realise the conditions under which he wrote this play, is to be made suddenly aware in a flash of illumination which happily was spared the man himself, of the greater tragedy of his own life to which this play-writing was after all the mere accompaniment.

Many times he had neither lodging for the night nor food for the day. Through streets and fields he wandered, always preoccupied with an image or a line that needed moulding. In his work alone lay any escape from the torturing thoughts of hunger

and sleeplessness. Everything that could make life acceptable was denied to him, but the gift of his imagination. Ease or contentment, the sense of personal possession, the touch of fine linen, the graces of well-being no less than the bare necessities of good health, were withheld from one more than usually well qualified by taste and nature to enjoy them.

The phrase "I have no money" has been so much abused in the mouths of those who always have some money, if only a little, as to have become void of meaning as the conventional "How do you do?" But the destitute speak not of poverty, or if on occasion they speak, it is to be merry over it; for the misfortune of abject poverty is too great for any creature suffering under it to think his misery explicable by the mere absence of money. To Savage, suffering and compassion were normal conditions; his heart was never rebellious, but sometimes, many times, it overflowed with an infinite pity, the sources of which were supplemented by his own distresses.

He could not afford even to buy paper on which to write his play, and only when he tired of composing the lines in his head, would his eyes rove the streets for some scrap which might serve his purpose. Then he would beg pen and ink from a shopman, and that strange mingling of the things he had seen in his wanderings, with the utterances of the figures in his tragedy, would confront him in the written scenes. The willow trembling over the brook was, for the poet,

an image of Somerset pining at the fancied treachery of his friend; when the winds gathered and sang round his head on some stormy evening, they gave him an image in which to picture Overbury's doom. At early morn he contemplated the dewdrop glittering in the flower, and in the noontide heat watched the thin steam tremble and float up from some moist place among the grass-tips.

With his observations of nature were sometimes mixed reflections on the outward show, the fair seeming of the city with its false patriots, its scheming statesmen, its harlots so ready to put on the panoply of human love which they could never feel. And when the summer yielded to winter and the searching wind lashed him as he walked, he would think of the seas of melted snow in which its wings had been dipped before they swept all winter into the shivering frame of a beggar poet. Now and again the image of maternity as a thing infinitely tender forces its way into his lines. No ill-usage could embitter his mind for long on that point, and the resentment raised by the conduct of Mrs. Brett always died, as it came, in fitful gusts of indignation.

When he had completed his play, there remained the tedious process of inducing the players to act it. To this end Savage yielded, with less reserve than his pride approved, to the emendations of a more experienced dramatist. "Approbation," wrote Mr. Colley Cibber on another occasion, "is the warm

weather of a theatrical plant." Who could question the soundness of this prolific writer's claim to detect in Savage's tragedy the places which imperilled its success with an audience? Nevertheless it hurt the author to expose the delicate veins of his verse to Cibber's knife; and whatever were the faults in the tragedy, Cibber was not sufficiently attuned to its aims to make all the improvements that would best have expressed them. His limitation as a critic of literature is unerringly revealed in what he failed to delete in Overbury's description of the poison working in him. Here the author's delight in colour had lured him into composing the absurd lines:

> Flames wind about my heart. My brain burns red
> And my eyes swim in a blue sea of sulphur.

What actor could have sustained the tragic note over such a passage? The danger was all the greater for the inexperience of Savage, who himself chose to play the part of Sir Thomas Overbury. With him the music of the lines was safe, but he had to learn what a wide gulf stretched between the poet's and the actor's arts. His gestures, which were easy and impressive in conversation, became angular and forced on the stage; his voice was unequal to the strain put upon it; his figure and mien, so dignified when employed in the expression of his own personality, assumed a shape which beckoned the caricaturist when they were made vehicles for the pourtrayal of another. Nor would even accuracy of costume according to the

period of the play's action—an innovation which was introduced much later upon the English stage—have obliterated, while it might have helped to obscure, the certainty that Savage was not fitted by nature for the stage.

On the night of the twelfth of June 1723, the tragedy was performed for the first time at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane. Mr. Cibber's son, Theophilus, played the character of the Earl of Somerset, Mrs. Campbell that of the Countess, and the minor character of Isabella was taken by a lady whose name was given as Mrs. Brett. Who was she? The shadow of the woman who was once Anne, Countess of Macclesfield, falls again and again across the life of Savage. Very likely the other Mrs. Brett was present in the playhouse on the occasion of this performance. How extravagant were the situations into which his life cast him! To be impersonating the lover of the one Mrs. Brett on the stage, to be the bastard son of another Mrs. Brett in the audience, fighting a public way to recognition, striving as a poet and an actor to wring applause at the mimic suffering of betrayed friendship, to bring tears into eyes which could remain undimmed when he had come upon the obdurate lady on the staircase of her own house with that fevered entreaty to look with pity on her son!

XII

While poverty became more and more difficult to bear, it deepened in Savage the resolution not to harness his muse to his needs. His pride in the quality of his inspiration rose with every fresh rebuff inflicted upon it. He saw other men, with less ability, earning a livelihood ; but their brains were the slaves of their welfare, whereas with Savage, his welfare was the slave of his brain. So it came that he was forced by a series of desperate situations into the company of men whose activity he silently studied with lofty contempt, while he accepted from them the meals which, after all, were only the fruits of what he most despised. Every variety of literary treachery was unfolded to his curious observation. He saw, as he afterwards wrote, that to be "a scavenger of wit is a more gainful occupation than that of a delicate, moral writer." He met professional writers of libel and of obscenity ; men who were always ready for a price to blast a reputation or pander to the cynical commercialism of publishers like Curll. He examined the secret impulses which led men into the paths of journalism, whether they were disappointed aspirants to holy orders who could not prevail upon even the

lowest of the Fleet Street parsons to sign their testimonials, or whether they were travelling tutors out of a job, climbing their way to preferment through public adulation of a minister.

Savage was well aware that there was scarce a gentleman among the scribblers ; but they were excellent models for the study of human nature writhing under sinister conditions, and he regarded it as cowardice in one whose business was the comprehension of the world, to turn away from the contemplation of any fragment of it because it was a revolting spectacle. With arguments like this, he found it easy to silence the occasional whispers of a conscience naturally alive to the dangers of evil companionship. What liberty of choice was he in a position to exercise ? He could not be for ever at the door of Robert Wilks. Good manners imposed upon him the care not to abuse a hospitality so unsuspecting. So long as he kept his muse unsullied, the rest did not matter. Her purity shone with a splendour made all the more dazzling for him by frequent contrast with the drabs, besmirched and besotted, to whom this army of Grub Street hack writers paid servile court.

With all their readiness to sell themselves, they were often hard put to it to discover fresh contrivances for raising money. The supply of evil service often exceeded the demand. At such times it became necessary to raise subscriptions for some work which an author had no intention of producing, or to extort

a few guineas from the vanity of a nobleman by exaggerating his merits in a dedication. The longer Savage amused himself by fishing in these turbid waters, the more amazing became the specimens which he netted for his observation. The science of libel alone was a subject worthy of the satirist. The highest professors knew not only how to frame injuries and to make them effective, but also how to father them on innocent people. The greater a name, the less secure was its owner from fraudulent appropriation of it by some journalist wily enough to blacken it with impunity by forged correspondence. Every kind of imposture flourished. The art of unscrupulous advertisement, although in its infancy, showed a precocious activity. To inflate the sale of pamphlets, many a publisher thought nothing of deceiving the public into the belief that large numbers had already been distributed, by using a new title-page with the imprint of a new edition for every fifty copies issued. Translations appeared from the works of Frenchmen who had never written them, and old books furnished with new titles were sold for new without much serious risk of detection.

As he gained a deeper insight into the perfidies and the muddy commercialism of this society, as he studied the ins and outs of publicity and noted how frequently they bore a close relation to the ins and outs of political office, Savage saw that a great book might be written comprising all this material. It

should bear some such title as "An Useful Body of Immorality," and should abound in instructions how to be successful, as well as in conspicuous instances of success obtained by following the precepts laid down.

But while Savage imagined himself to be free from the influence of a world which appeared to him to caper and frisk at the bidding of Satan, his vanity and his appreciation of good cheer sometimes carried him into tavern friendships in which the point where contact vanishes into contamination becomes too fine to admit of discrimination. He felt himself equal to the company of the master wits of his time; but not yet could he boast of free access to them. Mediocrity was no merit for him, and rather than submit to the tedium of mediocre company, he chose the society of sycophants and rascals. In the mornings he accompanied them to Geneva shops, in the afternoon he dined with them at cook's shops, and often he would pass the night with them in some night-cellar in the Strand, where they sang catches and drank the starlight into daybreak. Their talk ranged from politics to elopements; their jests were as broad as the jests of wits in coffee-houses were pointed. Loose living and loose talking offered Savage temporary respite from the contemplation of his sorrows. Happily the memory of his intrigues has escaped perpetuation, while here and there in his writings may be found traces of repentance for some ignoble adventures with

the sex which he epitomised on one occasion as "some thought, much whim, and all a contradiction."

In the course of this experience Savage became familiar with a great variety of trades mistaken by the multitude for literature. For Grub Street was not only a place where the waters of corruption met: it had its honest, if vainglorious, contingent of ready writers; men who could produce, at short notice, any sort of composition, from a birthday ode to a distich for the sign of a country ale-house; bards who wrote rhymes for almanacs, wags who cudgelled their stubborn brains to invent conundrums. Occasionally, too, in the midst of this workshop of words, a happily-worded couplet would find its way into some insignificant performance—something that tickled the ear and haunted the memory. More rarely, beneath the heavy load of stale epithets, laboured a thought destined, much later, to arrest the reader's attention when it took the shape of perfect utterance from the mould of genius like Dr. Swift's. In the technical side of writing Savage was deeply interested; indeed to this passion may be attributed some part of his enthusiasm for Pope's work. No less truly of Savage than of the modern writer of whom the anecdote is related, could it have been said that it was not safe for a printer to conclude that everything necessary had been done when he had accurately printed from a manuscript the words, "No, no, no!" The author had still to be consulted as to the accuracy with which

this passage had been printed, before it was too late, in case he might wish to change the order in which the noes occurred !

With views like these Savage could hardly expect to obtain employment in Grub Street, where volumes were filled while he was hesitating over the position of a comma. He made no complaint at there being no room for his services. Indeed he would have been the first to take umbrage at any inference which might class him with the journalists. To grace their tables with his presence at a meal, was one thing ; but it was most emphatically another to part with any of that intellectual reserve which screens the aristocrat in letters from the curiosity of vulgar minds.

XIII

Aaron Hill, happily termed by one of his contemporaries "poet and projector," had composed the prologue and the epilogue to *Sir Thomas Overbury*, and had ingratiated himself with Savage by the deference which he had shown the author in not insisting on certain emendations. The amiability of Hill has survived all his poems and many, but not all, of his schemes. He was terribly versatile, and could do anything, although, perhaps, he never did anything supremely well. His writings include a history of the Ottoman Empire, the libretto of Handel's *Rinaldo*, a translation of Voltaire's *Merope*, and a congratulatory poem to Peter the Great! In the course of his life he patented a process for extracting oil from beech-mast; grew vines in Essex; advanced a method for the manufacture of potash! Five years before the production of Savage's tragedy he had proposed to settle a colony in Georgia, but it was not till 1733 that the design was accomplished under General James Oglethorpe. Savage commemorated it in verse.

In Hill, Savage discovered the ideal friend; an exquisite sensibility, a veneration for distress, sympathy

with high aims, a natural belief in the goodness of human nature which did not shut his eyes to evil, or shrink from express condemnation of it, when it confronted him. The influence of Hill soothed and fostered what can only be called the religious spirit in Savage. Even at this period of his youth defiance and debauchery were almost invariably succeeded by penitence and the attempt to live nobly. Christianity recoiled upon his naturally Christian temperament in all the greater force with every departure from its precepts. Hill knew that a wild eye and a reckless air were no clue to the deeper instincts in his friend's nature. He looked upon him as one fighting fearful odds ; no friend could see his grimaces without turning aside in pity rather than contempt. What made the spectacle all the more painful was the peace-loving nature of the combatant, a man made desperate, dislocated into a pose, seeking to justify the hardness of his fate, to welcome familiarity with rakes and harlots, singing a hymn to debauchery, when his soul was far from the masquerade in which his body was making so lively a figure. Gentleness, serenity, the flowered margin of the lake, the moonbeam on the roofs of silent houses ; always a company, now grave, now gay, never a crowd ; study with ease ; the pursuit of poetry, no series of sudden explosions, but a well-ordered state in which what seem to be the small things of life are elevated into the high atmosphere of philosophy—these were some of the elements, the

continuous presence of which was conceived by Hill to be indispensable for bringing the talents of Savage to perfection.

But the prospect of obtaining these conditions seemed remote. As the years advanced the adventurous element in Savage's life deepened, the superficial reflexion of life in the mirror of literature expanded. The difficult problem presented to every artist of fusing a high vision with the lessons of actual experience, enabling aspiration to thrive in the near presence of humiliation, was none the less menacing in Savage's day for being less completely understood than in an age after Goethe. To be forced to associate with men like Curll, was an injury to legitimate pride which could not be extinguished by a stroke of wit in a satire. Savage had the power of ridicule, but he suffered from genuine scruples. He was hurt by moral turpitude, while greater poets saw in it principally an excuse for magnificent invective. The career of Savage is invested with a permanent interest because to a large extent it represents the more or less constant endeavour of the poet in rags to pick his way undefiled through the mud of journalism. His abhorrence of the baser ends which the power of wielding a pen is frequently made to subserve, is all the more articulate in him, because his genius did not carry him outside the range of infection. He did not cast about for a practical means of putting an end to a necessity which wounded his self-respect, but he drifted from

From a contemporary print.

AARON HILL.

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one perplexity into another, seeking to avoid contamination, when it was so near that he was compelled to touch it in order that he might thrust it from him. Dependence galled him. Yet he had partaken of much charity. Steele, Wilks, even Mrs. Brett had ministered to his needs. As the occasion for such charity increased he became more sensitive, captious as to the way in which he would allow people to help him. Hill's way was perfection. By taking a favour from Hill you made the man happy ; gratitude flourished in you in the absence of all obligation. What a contrast to those whose relief added insult to distress !

Hill's activity at this period included the half editing of *The Plain Dealer*, a sheet which he resolved should use all its influence in the advocacy of Savage's merits. He began by publishing some verses on the poet's ill-usage by his mother, to which was appended a compassionate comment on his misfortunes. A few months later, in November 1724, public curiosity was roused to new heights by the appearance of a letter from Mr. Savage himself in Hill's periodical, followed by an editorial note expressing full trust in the good faith of the unhappy writer, and an earnest appeal for support in the proposal he had set out.

Savage's letter, of which Hill left out much that was very new and surprising (as he states in his comment), involves the story of the poet's origin in

fresh obscurity for the inquirer. The letter was accompanied by documents and "convincing original letters" (such is the writer's phrase) by which the validity of his claim would appear incontestable to any one who examined them. Hill did examine them, and was satisfied of their genuineness. Savage stated that they had been prepared for a person too just and too powerful to leave any room for doubting that redress was within sight. The rest of the letter was an invitation to the public to subscribe for a collection of poems to be edited by Savage, with instructions for leaving half guineas at Button's Coffee House in Covent Garden, where receipts would be given.

What became of these documents? What was the nature of their contents? Who wrote the letters? To whom were they addressed? Lady Mason, Mrs. Brett's mother, had died in 1717; two years later Curll's *Poetical Register* had alluded to a Mrs. Lloyd as Savage's godmother who died before the boy was ten years of age. Five years after this *The Plain Dealer* contains these tantalising allusions to letters which vanish for the historian as soon as they have been mentioned. What did Anne Brett make of Savage's letter in *The Plain Dealer*? It was hard she should be held up to obloquy after having buried the notoriety of the Countess of Macclesfield (as she thought) more than twenty years before in her marriage with Colonel Brett. Perhaps she did not know

whether Richard Savage was in fact her son. Perhaps she knew he was her son and that he was incapable of proving it. Or again, perhaps she knew he was not her son, but feared he might produce arguments which would make it very difficult to convince the world of the truth.

On the other hand, nothing but the dexterity of an advocate's mind, building a brilliant and plausible fabric on that insufficiency of facts which makes the whole matter an insoluble mystery, can pourtray Savage as a conscious impostor. So long as registers can be falsified, that is to say, until the end of the world, the identity of every man and woman alive is, and always must be, a matter of faith. You can forge a document, but you cannot forge human nature. And in the frequency with which Savage in his poems comes back to the subject which tortured him—in the light of the passion, the pain, the bitter irony and the sad defeat expressed with such unfaltering nerve, it is next to impossible to convict him of fraudulent intention. When he writes of his mother, it is as if he were governed by some force that makes the words glow. Goldsmith thought him an indifferent poet, but detected his truth of thinking, and Goldsmith was a master in sincerity.

But the great forgeries in the history of literature ? Well, their authors have been as great as their works ; their objects, too, were elaborate and they were at elaborate pains to compass them. From the False

Decretals to the poems of Chatterton there have been many shining examples. But Savage is not of this company. He was a man pursued from his birth by a complication of miseries. Wherever he went he made friends, but the power exercised by his personality failed to satisfy his needs for human affection. The brilliant passages in his life helped temporarily to delude him into an assumed acquiescence in the vanities. But in the hours of conscious, solitary reflection which succeeded his appearances as a public figure, he felt all the desolation of a child crying its way through a wilderness of streets after the mother it has lost. Whoever that mother was, Savage never succeeded for long in rising above the crushing sense of his deprivation. Do the beggar's sores hurt him the less because he is driven by want to expose them to the compassion of the multitude?

XIV

The effect of Aaron Hill's good offices was to produce a subscription amounting to seventy guineas for Savage's *Miscellanies*. The nobility, it seemed, was not indifferent to the merits of an "injured nobleman." Savage himself was surprised at the readiness with which they had responded to his appeal. In course of time the profits of his tragedy amounted to a hundred pounds, which would have appeared little enough as a gift, but to one unaccustomed to the idea of possessing a commercial value in his talents, was unexpectedly large as payment for dancing attendance on his unbending, supercilious muse. Nor were these his only sources of satisfaction at this time. Mrs. Oldfield, as she was carried to the theatre in a chair attended by two footmen, still the reigning satirist of fashionable folly, elegant, lively, from whose shoulders a scarf would fall with no less grace than the speeches in a comedy from her lips, had always a smile for the author of *Sir Thomas Overbury* on his way to discover new delights in the impersonations of the actress.

In spite of his failure as an actor, Savage continued to visit the theatre with regularity. Here he could

enlarge his critical faculty, study the persons in the boxes no less assiduously than the personages on the stage, meet his friends and improve acquaintance with their hospitality. He could learn, too, the latest gossip—how, in his sixty-fifth year, King George had at last succumbed to the attractions of an Englishwoman (all the others had been Germans). It is true she looked more like a Spanish lady, but she was Anne Brett's daughter, and soon after her father's death she became the King's recognised mistress. To heighten the melodramatic disparity between Savages's condition and that of the woman whose acknowledgment of any relation to him was so stubbornly withheld, Mrs. Brett had now become a kind of left-handed mother-in-law of Majesty itself, while her son (more nobly born, if less legitimately, than this highly distinguished half-sister—such was his own reflection) was still indebted to the charity of friends like Hill and Mrs. Oldfield, a projector-poet and an actress, without whom, even with the tide of public approbation beginning to turn in his favour, he could not have kept himself outside a debtors' prison. Beside the splendour of a court life, even Mrs. Brett's habit of living must have been moderate, and Mrs. Brett spent on her coach and horses alone more than Savage on the whole paraphernalia of existence.

On every side, circumstances shaped themselves ironically for this philosophic poet. He wanted to be called son by an ordinarily human mother; instead

of this, it was his fate to be called half-brother of a king's mistress. He wanted to rise clear on the wings of his muse and float high up into an atmosphere of demigods; accident seemed for ever to keep him on earth, too near the little writers who pursued petty ambitions. If his genius was too thin for the company of Pope, were not his sensibilities too fine for that of bookseller Curll? Those who looked for quality in his dedications could find it alone in the persons to whom they were addressed; for he praised without discrimination, and in terms too extravagant to be persuasive. In the dedication of the *Miscellanies* to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, he confused the combination of force and grace in her prose with a look in her eye. So averse was his nature from bowing to dependence of any kind, that when he stooped perforce, he stooped lower than was becoming.

His mind struggled at this period to exercise itself on something vaster and more comprehensive in design than he had as yet attempted: it was to him as if the time was coming when he could see life in perspective, when its contradictions and its separate experiences were lifting him to a conception of the whole. He had won compassion for his misfortunes and compliments for what he had written, but this was not enough. He felt in himself the power, and sought the opportunity to manipulate a world if not of persons, of imagined scenes and melodious reflections. The solitude and the peace of the country beckoned

him from the turbulence of the city ; the shade of trees seemed worth all the gay shelter of the coffee-house for one who wished to pursue undisturbed the fugitive ideas which had to be caught and decked out with minute particularity to serve a poet's scheme. For Savage, the theatre was not confined to the play-houses of Drury Lane and Lincoln's Inn Fields. It lay all about him in the streets and in the fields through which he had wandered while composing his tragedy. The streets and the fields : therein lay for him, as for the poets of his time, the grave distinction. He would leave his lodging in Westminster, and court the Muse far from the haunt of gay companions and brilliant conversation. She would put finger to her lip and show him the city glimmering far off like some pool busy with a swarm of hovering black insects. In the vast landscape fashioned by an almighty hand, London was one spot and nothing more.

While he was revolving these things in his mind, death was overtaking King George in his chariot on the Hanover road and snatching from his young English mistress the prospect of a coronet. While she was lamenting that the period of her splendid frailty had been so brief and that she had no children for hand-some monuments of the royal lover's folly, Richard Savage was celebrating the late "most gracious Sovereign" in a poem sacred to his "glorious memory." A thousand pens were scribbling on the same subject all over the country : as the planets were held in balance

by an all powerful Will, so this great monarch had held the nations in equipoise : the Swede was saved, the aspiring Czar thwarted ; Austria made bold to dare the Turk ; Spain made to quake at the British Lion's roar. Of what avail were the passions of the nations against Brunswick's wisdom ?

By his poem Savage proved a capacity for this kind of writing which he himself held in some contempt. He also added to his list of patrons the name of George Dodington. If one Brunswick was dead, another was ready to step into his place. Dodington had written a flattering poem to Sir Robert Walpole, who was still in power and could look forward to a long tenure of office with some confidence.

XV

The autumn of the year, a season for grave resolutions, when the falling leaf (for those who can penetrate the mysterious charm of its motion) is less a symbol of decay than a gesture of nature slipping off her summer finery, nursed in Savage a mood propitious to the unfolding of a poem which should represent the sum of his philosophy. Narrow streets tricked out in festive decoration for the Coronation were ill suited for that silent meditation towards which he inclined. His brain yearned for a pageant without people. While the citizens were shouting "Huzza!" at Queen Caroline as she sparkled through London in her hired jewels, the poet was watching the exquisite procession of colours that progressed in waves now red, now yellow, now gold with countless intermediate shades, through the forests of Richmond. Here was no borrowed majesty, but the very raiment of God shining serenely in opalescent sky, glittering on the curling river, twinkling in the eye of the first star which drew the solitary wayfarer's gaze upwards, a tear in the firmament, as night stole swift and certain upon the twilight of October.

The longer he reflected, the sweeter and the truer

appeared to him the consolations of retirement. The value of life glimmered at him through a veil of gentle melancholy. How small were the functions of courtiers and ministers of State in comparison with the vision of the hermit in his cave! In activity he saw error, whether in the pursuit of private passions like those which had carried him often into the riotous company of the night tavern, or in the elaboration of public schemes with the subtleties of which Whigs and Tories were covering the nakedness of self-interest. He thought of himself as a minute particle in an infinitely large creation. Contemplation lifted him above his own sorrows and his own needs; as he mused, they dwindled to almost comical proportions. What did they matter? The thing that mattered was the tree staring naked to the sky, not the myriads of leaves that fluttered from its branches to the ground. So with everything. Monarchy mattered, but it was of little account whether one George or another sat in velvet and silver.

Savage did not say to himself: I too am a part of the spectacle, I am the figure of the poet familiar to all ages, moving apart from the crowd, yet on the same plane, with eyes turned heavenwards whilst theirs are on the ground. He said to himself: My own distress is a part of the spectacle, but I am no part of that distress; I am born demigod, a permanent alien from the crowd. My place is on the hill-top. Alone with nature I can stoop before my Maker; and

the hill-top is nearer to the stars than the valley. To think justly and to do no harm, are the laws that shall govern my being.

In such a frame of mind he began to write a long poem, at one with himself, with his subject, and with the scenes of woodland and water which provided a setting in harmony with the whole design. Never before had he tasted so long a respite from all agitation. As the days passed in uneventful succession, the idea of his poem took more tangible shape in his brain : one image was born of another ; the lines began to flow and multiply. Richmond at that time could show no more impressive figure than that of the poet, pacing with deliberate slowness along her walks in spite of the growing cold, a figure of middle height clothed in a suit of black and wearing a sword.

It was on the twentieth of November (a Monday) that the progress of his studies was slightly disturbed by the reflection that he had not yet discharged his lodgings in Westminster, and that his circumstances did not justify his paying for rooms in London when his plans were likely to keep him in the country. By giving up his town apartments he would not only be saved an unnecessary expense, but also the temptation of being lured from his seclusion at Richmond. He had hesitated before taking a step so decisive ; for his retirement, after all, might prove to be the result of a passing mood. But with the continued tranquillity of many weeks all doubt had disappeared. His mind was

made up, and he interrupted his work in order that he might resume it with a purpose irrevocably fixed, when he should have returned from Westminster with his lodgings discharged.

With his purpose accomplished he now stood in Queen Street watching the lights spring behind the windows of houses as the darkness stole upon the city. London was clothed, for him, in the novel light of this farewell. He was leaving behind him the place of busy rivalries and dark activities, of huddled houses and men and women plotting one another's discomfiture. Soon he would be on the road leading him to the peaceful hamlet of Richmond. Solitude and the starlight on this cold evening seemed to him a noble substitute for the crowd and the comfort of the tavern. He thought of moonlight on the river, of the steady passage of the landscape past him as he walked, the blood running merrily in his limbs, his face tingling with the wind.

As he turned in the direction of Hyde Park he was greeted by familiar voices, and on each side a friend linked an arm in his. A disconcerting encounter; but the habit of the town was upon him before he had time to perceive how ill it accorded with his present inclinations. To refuse an appearance of conviviality was ever an impossibility for him, and yet when he found himself with Mr. William Merchant and Mr. James Gregory in a Westminster tavern woo'd by the allurements of good fare, good wine and gay

company in an atmosphere cheerful and warm, his spirits lagged. These friends had chanced upon him in a moment singularly inauspicious, and the process of lifting himself to something like merriment was like forcing back the hands of a clock when the machinery has been wound, and they have already begun to move from another and a later figure on the dial.

It was some time before Gregory and Merchant discovered the origin of a solemnity which it took all their most daring flights of impropriety and banter to disperse. At first Savage smiled indulgently at them, like one who watches a poor performance with some pity for the actors in it. They represented well enough the company from whom he was beating a retreat—very kind, very gay, very shallow. On Savage they looked with mingled awe and amusement: in their eyes he was a scholar, a man of parts who flattered them by giving his company. They were deeply sensible and yet unconscious of the fascination exercised upon them by his presence. His mind moved easily on heights to which theirs had no access, and yet he assumed nothing, even surprised them now and again with the simple expression of truths which they knew, but knew not how to utter.

When he disclosed to them his intention, so happily interrupted (for with the bottle Savage ceased to yearn for solitude and starlight, and welcomed the candles and the company) they laughed at him and swore

he should alter his resolution. Their derision only strengthened it. This was his farewell banquet ; secure in that conviction he could afford to loose the reins to merriment. Never before had they seen him so animated. Jests tumbled from him in reckless felicity. From one topic to another his mind flew with a nimbleness that favoured idle conversation and opened the door to hilarity. His talent for mimicry was exercised with delightful freedom, to the amusement of those who chanced to be in the coffee-house. He was wise and witty, tender and fierce, as the whim took him. Now his speech was a prayer at which all held their tongues in a surprised silence ; now it was a blasphemy, or something so like one as to raise coarse laughter. Now and again the animation of his spirits betrayed him into the utterance of poetry, his voice lingering with affectionate accuracy on melodious verses of Parnell and Pope—and of Mr. Richard Savage. From the summit of audacious flights of rhetoric in which he depicted himself as a master divinely privileged to extol or to ridicule all that came within his notice, he plunged to the depths of an extravagantly simple humility, pitying and praising poverty as he looked at the lees of the wine in his glass which he rolled gently to let the beam of a candle fall in the bottom, making it glimmer like a ruby. And he spoke too of poverty like one who has tasted it, but who has lived by the light of strong contrasts, now supping in splendour at the tables of

noblemen, now wandering hungry with unbeaten pride along the highways and byways of the city.

Late into the night they talked, Gregory and Merchant blessing their good fortune, and flicking the dying embers of conversation again and again with some toast to which Savage drank, sometimes in earnest, sometimes in ridicule, and always deep. Richmond never vanished entirely out of his thoughts ; but as the hours advanced, it became less and less the place of his lodging, with a table on which lay scattered sheets of manuscript waiting the author's completion, and more and more a spot on the round globe enchanted by a poet's fancy, peopled with elves that danced and beckoned by the quivering light of a cold moon.

Emptier and emptier became the coffee-house, the candles had burned almost to their sockets, the brisk sound of footsteps in the street became rarer. Midnight had struck an hour ago. Mine host was sleepy and wondered if the gentleman in black would ever come to an end of his speeches. Savage, espying disconsolation in the man's look, and guessing the cause of it, himself began to realise the lateness of the hour, to wish himself in bed. The room was growing chilly, and he had no mind at that moment for the open. But on inquiring if they could have beds in the house for the night, they were told that all were taken. The spirits of Gregory and Merchant rose blithely to the situation. Neither of them having any

fixed residence it was natural for them to lend their company through the rest of the night to the friend whom they had brought into this comfortless predicament. They would have attended him to Richmond straightway, but that in darkness the road was not safe. It would be better to idle away a few more hours and set out from the city when the sun was high enough in the heavens to distinguish a gentleman from a footpad before it was too late. In some uncertainty as to the immediate course of their intentions, the three emerged into the street, and with feelings half rueful, half contemptuous, heard the door of the Westminster coffee-house closed and bolted behind them.

XVI

The fire still burned cheerfully in the public coffee-room of Robinson's, near Charing Cross, at two o'clock in the morning. This was a place in which the hospitality of the hostess confined itself to no settled hours of the day or night. Mrs. Endersby kept open house for all who could pay, and she minded the clock as little as the characters of the people who patronised her establishment. To be obliging at all seasons, to ask no questions, to say little, unless on a matter of business, and to keep well with the watch, were the guiding principles of her life. Other coffee-houses might be centres for making reputations ; hers was the place in which to lay them aside for a few hours, or to part with them altogether.

The peaceful pursuit of vice might go with the exercise of much good nature ; Jane Leader, who was sitting with four men in the coffee-room, might be better acquainted with Mr. Nuttal, who was one of them, than she cared in public to acknowledge ; so long as the reckoning was paid the rest did not matter. Even the wicked must be suffered to exist, and the lights that shone from the windows of Robinson's

into the blackness of the night-ridden city frequently guided belated men and women with a little money and no scruples into the convenient shelter of a house within which many a broad jest had passed on its propinquity to Charing Cross, that monument reared by a pious king to the memory of a wife's devotion. Here wives were mocked and conjugal fidelity was regarded as a mental aberration.

Gregory had not walked far from Westminster with his two companions before his eyes discerned the familiar lights of Robinson's. Although they walked briskly and the first sting of the night air on their flushed faces had refreshed them, it soon became evident that this was no night for loafing in the streets. Merchant was all for going within, where fresh wine and another atmosphere would loose their spirits far into the morning. Savage was content to be led by the whims of the others until once more he should be secure from company in the seclusion of Richmond.

Mrs. Endersby started up at the sudden noise made at the door of the coffee-house; such furious rapping was an insult to her hospitality. She was half minded not to admit people capable of this unseemly conduct. The house was no fortress to be thus besieged, and who could say whether these persons had the price of a bottle upon them? When at last she unbarred the door, she concluded that the company were in liquor, and summoned all her

shrewdness to aid her in determining whether it would not after all be as profitable to exclude as to admit them.

But Merchant was in the passage, with the door closed behind him, before she had made up her mind. In a voice that frightened her he demanded a room. Muttering something to herself she bade them follow her. As soon as he saw the cheerless place into which she lighted them—a dingy room without a fire—Merchant became so indignant that he pushed her rudely.

Mrs. Endersby was no coward. She folded her arms and asked them either to begone or to order what they required. The maidservant, Mary Rock, was now also on the scene, and the voices of the men mingled in angry altercation with the tones of the women, now wheedling, now protesting. What did they want? Could they not rest content with the room offered? If it was a bowl of punch which would satisfy them, they should have it with a little patience, steaming hot. She would make it with her own hands. But she would not be put upon. Thus Mrs. Endersby.

But Merchant insisted on being shown to the coffee-room. Would they pretend that he and his friends were not fit company for its inmates? In his fury he seized a chair and made as if to strike the hostess. Mary Rock wondered how a gentleman could be so violent: the company in the coffee-room were about

to go; they had paid their reckoning, and so soon as the room was free, the gentlemen should move into it. Argument was of no avail to one in Merchant's condition. The women were pushed aside and the three friends, with Merchant in the van, made their way along the passage in the direction of voices, which, as they rightly assumed, came from the public coffee-room. The door was flung open, and they entered.

Jane Leader was sitting at a table with Mr. Nuttal, two brothers Lemery, and Mr. James Sinclair. They all looked up at the sound of this violent intrusion. Two other tables in the room were unoccupied, but they lay away from the fire. On the table at which the company were still seated, were their glasses and an empty bowl. Merchant stared insolently from face to face, and then advanced boldly to the fire. His air was that of a man who had reserved a room and was impatient to see the others gone. But although they were silent, perplexed at an impudence as difficult to parry as it was unexpected, they did not move.

Suddenly the table was overturned with a crash that brought them all to their feet. Swords flashed. It seemed as if Merchant had been content to throw a spark into a barrel of gunpowder and then watch the result; for he disappeared into a corner, and it was Gregory who ran about the room crying now to Nuttal and now to Sinclair to deliver his sword. While Nuttal was engaged by Gregory one of the Lemerys

and Jane Leader left the room, and Sinclair, doubting the issue of the encounter with his friend, advanced to his rescue.

But the sound of the falling table had roused Savage. His sword had been out in a moment. The place, the company, and the confusion of voices had stirred him to a keenness of perception on which action followed with uncontrollable swiftness. He saw a figure with drawn sword advancing in his direction ; the grinding noise of the steel as Sinclair's sword passed Gregory's and fell point downwards, tightened his nerve and steadied his vision. In another second Sinclair would recover, to assail—not Gregory, but himself. Thus far the consciousness of what was in his brain remained with him for the rest of his life. The next that he knew was the sensation of something soft and deep into which his sword slid, a precipitous thud on the floor as if some huge mass had fallen through the ceiling with nothing to break the violence of its impact, and a long-drawn cry of " Oh ! " sounding neither anguish nor indignation, but a despair that seemed to lie outside the range of human experience and almost beyond the range of human pity.

Merchant, from the darkness of his corner, could see Savage motionless, staring before him ; could see swim into his face such a pallor as a careless witness of the scene might easily have mistaken for death's messenger, in haste to seal the lips of a man mortally wounded. But it was not paleness alone that came

into that face, but also a look of terrible enlightenment, as if of a sudden unwilling eyes had been confronted with the nakedness of a secret in nature into which mankind had ever shrunk from prying. Mrs. Endersby in the meanwhile had run out for the watch ; and Jane Leader, returning furtively into the room, was in time to see a crowd of figures gathered about somebody heaped into a chair with his head on his bosom.

" Poor dear Sinclair's killed ! " she cried, throwing her hands up in a graceless gesture of despair, and she rushed towards the wounded man, who murmured in muffled tones, " I am dead ! I am dead ! " The others fell back a little to admit her approach. Hastily she whispered something in the ear of the maid-servant, tearing open Sinclair's coat as she spoke. The girl kneeled and put her lips to the wound, but no blood came.

The sight of Merchant's scared eyes peering at him from the other end of the room broke the spell of inactivity under which Savage laboured. There was yet time to escape, and with his sword still unsheathed he darted towards the door. As he did so, the room was suddenly made dark with the extinction of the candle-lights, and the arms of Lemery's brother closed about him. Scarcely had he freed himself when hat and wig were torn from his head, and he felt Mary Rock clinging to him like some savage beast to its prey. When at last he succeeded in disengaging his arm, he cut wildly about him, realising alone

from the sudden relaxation of her fingers and from her screams that he had injured the maid. Followed by Merchant he escaped through the door, the noxious hubbub of voices, the curses of the girl and the cries of "Murder!" pursuing them as they fled down the passage and out of the front door into the street.

Nuttal and Gregory had already been secured by three soldiers whom Mr. Lemery had fetched from a night-cellar and introduced into the room but a few moments after Sinclair had fallen. Almost at the same moment Mrs. Endersby had returned with two watchmen, but so deeply absorbed had they all been in watching the condition of the man in the chair, that not until the embers of a dying fire provided the sole light to guide their movements, did they become alive to the importance of capturing Savage and Merchant.

XVII

As he fled through the darkness, Savage was conscious that the attempt to escape was likely to prove futile. It was the thing to do, the thing that any one would do under such circumstances. Thousands of years ago it had been discovered to be the appropriate sequel to a violation of the law to flee from the legal consequences; but the judgment of the individual played no part in this mean skulking of the body. The legs ran, just as, by some scientific law, the muscles of the frog jumped after dissection. He was not surprised when he observed the passage into which he and Merchant had darted widen into a small courtyard with no issue.

To emerge once more in the direction from which they had come, would have been to walk into the enemy's hands; for by now the neighbourhood was awake. Shutters were opened and heads were peering from windows. Savage was sensible of his own movements being paralysed by the state of fear in which his friend stood; also he reflected that the interval between being charged and being tried would be more agreeably spent outside a gaol. For the rest, he would gladly have been done with the vulgarities

of a night arrest in a quarter to which the street-loafer rallied at the smallest signs of excitement. As the noise of people shouting, and the growing clatter of heels upon the stones reached them where they stood leaning against a wall in the dark court, his mind was with the search-party, his heart with the unhappy creature whose "Oh!" lingered in his ears. Now and then Merchant shuddered and gave out a muffled sound like that of the rag-and-bone collector whose lugubrious cry still falls upon the Londoner's ears in early morning. Nearer and nearer came the noise of what seemed in the stillness of that hour to be a multitude. Light began to glimmer along the thoroughfare visible through the narrow opening that led to where they listened and peered. Soon a sea of faces floated and swayed in the growing illumination. Some one called a halt, and several torches came together at the mouth of the passage. There was laughter, and a cry that by now most likely the malefactors were far down the river; but the torches followed a small body of soldiers into the courtyard, and Savage and Merchant were surrounded before even the dwellers in the court who now came to their windows could make out what was happening.

Savage had proffered his sword before it could be demanded of him; Merchant had none to surrender. A short and a brisk walk during which Savage realised that he was enjoying a novel opportunity of observing criminal faces among those who surrounded them,

brought them to the round-house where they were confined after brief formalities until the morning should be sufficiently advanced to call them before the Justices of the Peace. During these hours of waiting in a cell Savage felt no need for sleep and no solicitude about his own fate. He had been carried on a tide of misadventure into a new region of experience : the solitude of the prison cell in exchange for the solitude of Richmond Hill. But his anxiety to know how Sinclair fared grew almost into torture as the daylight came ; and the physical sensation of his sword sliding into something soft and deep returned to him at intervals, to mingle a sickening repugnance with a sorrow that rankled in him as he vainly strove to disenchant his memory of the last sound he had heard Sinclair utter.

To the proceedings before the Justices he paid the attention of a careless spectator inclined to ridicule. The circumstances in themselves were in danger of losing their true significance in the lurid atmosphere which hung about them ; but the fat content on the faces of Mr. Nathaniel Blackerby and his two brother Justices, whose righteousness was as profound as their knowledge of everything in general (and of human nature in particular) was shallow, added a fine edge of preposterous comedy to a situation tragic enough for a simple understanding without the pompous trappings of legal ceremony. On the evidence provided, Savage, Gregory, and Merchant were committed to the

Gate House Prison at Westminster to await trial, Nuttal being allowed to go free. The maid-servant had not been in a condition to appear, but the wound from Savage's sword had not been serious, and she would be able to give evidence when the trial came on.

If sleep would not come to Savage in the round-house, it fell upon him like a thief in the night soon after he had eaten his supper in the Gate House Prison, overpowering him with a suddenness to which he was unaccustomed. He dreamed that he was trying to hold the head of a drowning man above the surface of the water; but the head grew heavy, not with its overweight but with something that dragged with the force of a demon from under the stream, on the banks of which he kneeled. With all his might he strove to keep the head up; but he felt himself slipping inch by inch, and with a certainty that did not admit the smallest hope of recovery, over the edge of the river. And then of a sudden his mouth and nostrils were full of water; and as he looked up he saw lights on Richmond Hill with the stars overhead.

Two constables stood over him as he awoke, but they were obliged to shake him rudely before his mind jumped to a reality even less familiar than the dream which had oppressed him. He was to be removed to Newgate at once, for Mr. Sinclair had died of his wound. His first feeling was of relief that his suspense was ended, the suffering creature at rest.

On his way to Newgate he asked again and again for particulars, but they could tell him no more than the bare fact. His companions were removed, each separately, to the same prison. A whole week passed before the return of the Coroner's verdict.

During this time he was troubled chiefly with the consciousness that through him an innocent man had died. The lust to kill was nowhere in his nature. To handle a sword was part of a gentleman's equipment; but he had never used his to destroy; and although he was not the man to shrink from a duel, he would have been the last to allow a personal hatred to govern his conduct on the field. To do so, would in his eyes have been to degrade the art of swordsmanship. Nor did personal hatred form a natural part of his composition. Those whom he disliked were material for his satire; he felt no inclination to mercy with a pen in his hand; but he would have gone out of his way to benefit a man in distress for whose character he could express nothing but ridicule or contempt. Even for Mrs. Brett, the woman whom he conceived to have wronged him more than any other living creature, he would gladly have done a service. There had been a time when he would willingly have renounced his birthright for a kind word from that quarter. As for James Sinclair, he did not even know him, had not spoken a word to him. The man was the victim of mischance, a sudden brawl in a tavern, an idle quarrel about a wooden table,

a thing that raised men's voices on one day and was forgotten on the next.

And yet why was the blood of this innocent creature to pay forfeit for a mere loss of temper? The blood? No blood had come from that deadly wound, and again he pictured to himself the harrowing scene; never would its real significance be known to any one; it could only be deciphered darkly by the man elected by the malice of fate to strike a blow of which the consequences reached up to heaven and down to hell. Until that night was passed, Savage, to whom the unexpected in life was uncommonly familiar, had not realised to the full the preposterous element in his own career. The sense of his own importance rose with the discovery. He was more affected by the rarity than by the danger of his plight. To hunger inside a gaol instead of outside was a prospect that did not alarm him. Even if the law claimed his life (and of this the likelihood seemed small) and his connexion with the world were to be severed at Tyburn, such an issue appeared to him irrelevant, futile. The law could not raise the dead by levelling the living; and his life, upon which he smiled to think that, just like any other person in his situation, he set a value extravagantly out of proportion with its worth, was no living creature's concern.

The friends who visited him during this first week's detention in the prison found him as strangely composed as he found them incongruously solicitous on

the subject of his own welfare. Their minds pitched forward in a mixture of apprehension and curiosity to guess at what would happen ; his harped back in melancholy conjecture on the meaning of what had happened.

XVIII

On Tuesday, the twenty-eighth of November, in the first year of His Majesty King George the Second, the Coroner's Jury returned a verdict of Manslaughter against the three prisoners. The Crown lawyers were in no way influenced by this decision, and the Grand Jury found a true bill to their indictments, which charged Richard Savage with the murder of Sinclair, and James Gregory and William Merchant with aiding, assisting and comforting the said Richard Savage in the aforesaid murder.

The daily sheets were as nimble then as they continue to be now in drawing profit from crime or calamity. The case offered an unusual interest for the public. Mr. Savage, both in virtue of the mysterious circumstances about his birth and of his high attainments, was a figure to swell curiosity. Was he dark or fair, tall or short, of a lively or saturnine presence? How would he bear himself before the lawyers? Such were the elements of an interest which crowded the court when the case came on for hearing. Mr. Justice Page was in the heyday of his "hanging" career. No weakness, it might confidently be assumed, would intervene from that quarter to spoil a dramatic

situation. Page was a practical man, and understood the nature of business. It was only a few years before, that he had been acquitted by a narrow majority of attempting corruption in a parliamentary election.

Whatever may have been the deficiencies of the building, dating from the age of Elizabeth, in which this trial was conducted, the main tale told in its architecture was not, as it is in the new building of to-day, an incitement to a love of splendid comfort. In Savage's time no scenes in Arcady, a place in which it is supposed people wore no clothes and committed no crimes, decorated the walls of Justice Hall in the Old Bailey. The new building is a temple of sanitation in marble and oak, worthy to rank among the club-houses of New York. Consistently with the inconsistency of the whole conception, the gilded figure of Justice stands outside the courts on a high dome. Justice in the reign of King George the Second asserted herself without such tinkling symbols, in narrow chambers and a foul atmosphere. To strike fear into the criminal, to make the surroundings of the trial as sinister as was practicable, was held to be more important than to take elaborate and futile precautions against the danger of Judge and counsel catching a cold in the nose.

As the daylight wore to evening on this Thursday, the seventh day of December, the air became thicker and thicker, the interest of those who watched the evidence deeper and deeper At the request of the

prisoners the witnesses were examined separately, nor was their expectation entirely disappointed that in this way inconsistencies in the differing versions of the affair would favour their chances of acquittal.

Mr. Nuttal had seen, according to his own statements, a variety of details ignored by other deponents; so large a variety indeed, that he could hardly have seen and remembered more, or even as much, had he been a disinterested spectator of the scuffle, taking note of what was passing from a secure seat in a reporter's gallery: Gregory, whose sword had been broken in the encounter with Sinclair, had snatched his adversary's into his own hand to attack Nuttal; and Nuttal had wrested Sinclair's sword from Gregory's hand shortly before the entry of the soldiers. The description of Sinclair's sword flashing through the hands of successive combatants was a brilliant affair.

Jane Leader described how Mr. Savage stabbed the deceased. But somebody else had heard from her own lips that she left the room when the swords were drawn. Mr. Lemery and Mary Rock agreed in depicting the position of Sinclair's sword with the point downwards when the wound was given. It was generally admitted that Merchant had no sword at all, and that he gave the initial provocation from which the rest ensued. A watchman declared he heard Sinclair say he had been stabbed "barbarously before his sword had been drawn"; another watchman said he heard Sinclair say he had been stabbed "cowardly";

this witness further enlivened the picture of the scene after the fray by his description of the wounded man leaning his head upon his hand.

Savage noted with minute particularity each discrepancy as it occurred. His mind worked to perfection, and with a detachment that surprised even himself. Accustomed to the difficulties of finding and arranging the appropriate words for the expression of his thoughts, he had never before been obliged to concentrate the force of his intellect upon the disengaging of facts from a complicated mass of statements, some honestly mistaken, others deliberately misleading. Neither the ceremonial of the Court nor the presence of a crowded audience disturbed the nicety of his discrimination. Only when the circumstances of Sinclair's death were disclosed, the balance of his mind quivered, and it needed a strong effort to keep alive his critical faculty above the sense of guilt and sorrow which threatened to rob him of his self-possession.

A parson spoke to having prayed by the bedside of the dying man and recommended his soul to the mercy of Almighty God. Mr. Nuttal had begged the deponent to put a question to Sinclair, but on being refused had persuaded him to stay, while he himself asked from which of the gentlemen the wound had been received.

A growl of mingled delight and execration greeted the announcement of the answer which had been given by the dying Sinclair: "From the shortest,

in black." Clearly this was Savage, for Gregory was taller than he was, and Merchant wore coloured clothes.

Even the evidence of the surgeon, merciless as it was, weighed less cruelly on Savage's mind than that of the parson. The wound was half an inch in breadth and nine inches in depth; it was on the left side of the belly, parallel with the navel; the sword had grazed on the kidney, which in the opinion of the deponent had been the cause of death. Such a wound could not have been received in a posture of self-defence, unless the deceased had been left-handed.

From the first glow of satisfaction with which the listeners had hailed the identification of the man who inflicted the mortal wound, their minds now turned to the picture of a man rushing with drawn sword upon Savage (for there had been no suggestion that Sinclair was in fact left-handed) and meeting the dire fate intended for his adversary. Perhaps, after all, the poet in black was as much the victim of mischance as the luckless madman making this furious onslaught.

By the time Gregory spoke in his defence, the afternoon was well advanced. He attempted to shield Merchant by contending that the table had been overturned by accident; their object in insisting on entering the coffee-room had been to have the benefit of the fire; as for those who had brought evidence

for the King in this trial, he could only point to the looseness of their lives. Such people were not likely to become of a sudden scrupulous ; their words were indeed no more respectable than their characters, and Robinson's coffee-house was known to be an infamous resort.

Gregory's speech was awkward, ill-judged, and exiguous. He was overweighted by the circumstances in which he found himself, and when he sat down, he had rather prejudiced than assisted the case for the prisoners.

From the intricacies of a situation thus further complicated, Savage emerged with a success that surprised the Court. Until now they had seen him calm, observant, offering perhaps in the rapid movement of his eyes from the witness to the Judge, and from the Judge to the jury, the sole clue to the tension at which his brain worked. As he now rose to speak in his defence, aided for the purposes of impressing a multitude by the scenic value lent by candle-light to the place in which he stood, all those in Court felt the power and the fascination of his presence. As Sir Thomas Overbury, on the stage of Drury Lane, the mimic hero calling for æsthetic compassion in mock circumstances, he had failed ; as Richard Savage, on his defence for murder in Justice Hall, he succeeded.

Confidence in his success sounded at the very outset in the simple account of his pursuits at Richmond

and the object which had induced him to interrupt them for that fatal visit to London. And the longer he spoke, the firmer and the smoother became his utterances. Even Mr. Justice Page, who was no friend of the muses, could not resist the spell which this man cast upon all who listened to him, and the Judge's habitual air of insolent familiarity with all that anybody would or could say under any set of circumstances in that court, changed to an expression of involuntary interest which, for those who knew him well, invested him with an almost comical appearance.

When Savage had brought his narrative to the brink of the scuffle in the coffee-house, he paused to examine the several accounts that had already been provided. He built no theory on their discrepancies, nor did he deny his unfortunate thrust at Sinclair. His knowledge of what could and what could not be done with a sword enabled him, had he chosen, to have thrown ridicule on more than one version, but he preferred to take his stand on ground that could be more easily understood than the technicalities of swordsmanship. In an affair so sudden, involving the more or less passionate action of so many persons, who could say with any certainty how every step in the accident had been conducted? If they looked for certainty, where, on the other hand, could they find it so convincing as in his own contention, supported, or at the very least, unweakened by what

had so far been urged, that throughout the whole brief struggle there had been nothing to show a possibility of premeditated malice. He did not know Mr. Sinclair ; he had no grievance against Mr. Sinclair ; why should he want to kill Mr. Sinclair ? But if they supposed for an instant that in the disorder of the affray Mr. Sinclair had been bent on killing him, neither reason nor law could oblige him to await the blow. Nay, if his own life were in peril, or if only he had good cause for assuming it to be in peril, and he had been the first to level his assailant, this was killing in self-defence, but it was no murder. Yet would he not be satisfied, whatever might be his fate, to rest under an imputation of ferocity. Neither he nor the gentlemen of his company could ever admit inhumanity to be a part of their dispositions. His voice faltered as he spoke of what he had felt in being deprived of the power to attend the bedside of the man who had died by his hand ; of how he had longed to hear the word " pardon " from those lips which alone by that expression could have mitigated the severity of his distress. But the consequences of a rash act had pursued the offender with an overwhelming rapidity. A few weeks ago he had courted obscurity and retirement. Now the folly of a few minutes had permanently disabled his peace of mind and placed him in the glare of a public criminal trial. Some explanation, he thought, might be expected of his flight on the night of the accident,

lest it were supposed that he had wished to escape the due consequences of the law. In that sudden emergency he had hoped to avoid the costs and the discomforts of a gaol before his trial; but no compulsion would have been necessary to make him appear at the bar. What man of any spirit could bear to live in hiding with this heavy shadow upon his character? He was no highwayman practised in the daily defiance of the King's law, a creature whose very profession was a battle against justice. To others, however, he left the pourtrayal of his own character. In the presence of a tragic occurrence it was always tempting to fix the responsibility upon some person or persons, for the mind shifted with a natural readiness from the contemplation of injury to the idea of retribution. Herein, he thought, lay a danger: was it not the idea of avenging upon himself the crime inflicted on another that made the suicide? When he compared the circumstances of his unfortunate accident with those in which his judges were to come to a conclusion on the charges made, he was lifted up by the prospects of acquittal; for in the one case, impatience and folly had obscured the mind and disturbed the actions of men innocent of evil and had brought them into their present situation; in the other case, patience and wisdom could be freely expended on making the issue in accordance with justice; deliberation, slow and mature, was the high privilege of the Court; impulse precipitate and

immature, too often the parent of misadventure, was the sorry despot by whom men suffered themselves to be guided in the midnight brawl. He who spoke had been as free from premeditated malice as the law which would judge him. On that knowledge rested his security and the security of those whose share in the blame must in any case be regarded as subordinate to his own.

More than an hour had passed when Savage resumed his seat, conscious from the silent attention and the eager expression on the faces of those assembled that he had not spoken in vain. No rhetorical outburst had marred the serenity of his appeal to reason. The lawyers exchanged looks that disclosed respect as well as astonishment at the capacities of one who would have made an ornament to their own profession.

A number of witnesses were now called to the characters of the persons in the case. Mr. Nuttal was said on the morning after the accident to have observed that if he had any one of the prisoners in a convenient place where the law was not likely to intervene, he would cut his throat ; but some friends of Mr. Nuttal declared such an observation to be inconsistent with his well-known civility, and Mr. Nuttal himself admitted that he was so moved at the barbarous treatment of Mr. Sinclair, that he may well have expressed a wish to meet the malefactors on an open field where he might spare them the trouble of being put to the law and

do justice himself. Several persons of distinction appeared to support the claim of the prisoners to being peaceable men in general, more disposed to avoid than to enter into a quarrel.

Nothing now remained to be done, except to sum up the evidence and take the verdict of the jury. For this purpose Mr. Justice Page, who had completely recovered from the surprise into which the exhibition of Savage's talents had cast him, gathered himself into an attitude deliberately impressive and began his speech. From a brief introductory passage in which he examined the inconsistencies in the evidence which might be construed in a favourable light for the prisoners, he passed to a narrative of the dispute in the coffee-house, according to which, if the jury believed it, they must bring in a verdict of murder not only against him who gave the wound but also against the others who aided and abetted in the violence. As the speech advanced, it was abundantly clear, that in spite of the alternatives drily submitted to the jury, the weight of the speaker lay heavily on one aspect of the evidence. If the prisoners were the aggressors and the deceased had given no provocation, then he had been murdered. The onus of the disaster could not be divided where one side alone had initiated the quarrel. The suddenness of the action had no bearing on the matter, for the nature of a crime could not be affected by the speed at which it might be committed.

Touching the question of character, and the defence

From an engraving by Vertue after a painting by Richardson.

SIR FRANCIS PAGE.

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made by Mr. Savage, the Judge now disclosed something of that quality which earned for him an evil reputation. He made an attempt to prejudice the jury against Mr. Savage on account of that distinction of address and charm of presence which had impressed the Court so favourably. As if, for one who had committed a murder, it must be an additional crime to be convicted of being a gentleman. But the slow, mocking tones of Page were of a sudden interrupted by Savage, who protested vehemently against this misrepresentation. The Judge's uplifted hand and rebukeful roar of "Silence!" were powerless to arrest the clear voice of the interrupter as it rose freely and with dramatic intensity above the hubbub that began to sound in the court. A repetition of the order from the bench was no more effectual.

Once more the attention of the assembly was centred upon that graceful figure, resolute, erect, animated by a noble indignation, as he continued to make his protest against invidious innuendo, the words coming like a shower of barbed arrows that pricked the majesty of the bench with a deadly certainty, and flattered the public ear, not only by emphasising the unequal odds under which an accused man labours in a court of law, but also by the daring insinuation that the mind of the man presiding over the trial was intellectually depraved. There was a murmur of applause, but before it could rise to a shout, Savage felt himself tightly grasped from behind, and

the astonished spectators saw him carried by force from the bar.

With unruffled composure, and in a slightly louder voice, the Judge now continued his observations : the character of the prisoners should influence a jury where the proof is doubtful, but not to defeat plain and positive evidence. He proceeded to point out the difference between manslaughter and murder. Savage's repudiation of premeditated malice was of no help in repelling the charge for murder. Premeditation was no necessary element in murder ; and malice, which was necessary, was assumed by the law to exist where one was the aggressor and pursued his insult with his sword, so as to kill the person attacked without any initial provocation on his part.

On the conclusion of Mr. Justice Page's speech, Savage was re-introduced into the court, and the prisoners were allowed to call the attention of the jury to anything material to their defence which might have been omitted in the summing up of the evidence. But their minds pitched towards the end of suspense. They had very little to add, and made the briefest statements. It was already past six o'clock when the jury gave their verdict : that Richard Savage and James Gregory were guilty of murder, and that William Merchant was guilty of manslaughter.

XIX

As Savage was conducted back to Newgate, his mind fluttered over the meaning of the word "murderer," and endeavoured to see a sort of appropriateness in its application to himself. He had been convicted of a murder ; consequently, he was a murderer ; and yet every effort to regard the title as an accurate description, something like the labels attached to rare plants, was defeated by a vague revolt which found expression in an involuntary parade of arguments to prove that the jury had been guilty of an abuse of language.

A murderer was one who foully, brutally robbed a fellow-creature of life for base and hideous motives, not one who in an irresponsible moment, under the excitement of a sudden situation, had lost control over his sword. But was it only over his sword? Was it not also over his will? Even so, the man no less than the sword was a mere instrument in the hands of a blind force. The whole thing had been an accident ; but accidental murder was a phrase that spelled nonsense ; murderous accident was nearer the truth. There were, of course, so many vicissitudes in human life which eluded anything like accurate delineation in words. He thought of the early days in which the

mystery of his birth had been suddenly unravelled to him, and remembered, the first time he had whispered to himself the word "bastard," how he had felt a hot sense of shame from which a certain wonder had disengaged itself, that he should even for a moment admit the humiliating influence of a reproach which could not imply demerit, unless for those who were too weak-minded to dissociate truths from mere words. Nature had made him a bastard, and hardly had he grown accustomed to her capricious, her artificial distinctions between natural and unnatural children, before chance had made him a murderer. Unfathomable was the irony with which God suffered multitudes to follow the shadows cast by words, grotesque, misleading, and to ignore the substances for which those words stood.

His reflections were violently turned from their course by the new usage to which he was subjected in re-entering the prison. Hitherto he had been suffered to mingle with the other prisoners, and the edge of his own distress had been blurred in the study of theirs. Now he was more closely confined, and his limbs ached beneath the weight of fifty pounds of iron. It was very cold, but the hardship of his condition raised in him no commiseration, although he thought tenderly of Gregory and wondered how he was bearing the affronts put upon him.

It was consistent with the quixotic nature of legal justice that Merchant should be spared from swinging at Tyburn, which (it was no longer possible to

doubt) would be the fate of Gregory and himself. Before their execution there would still be time to write a paper "On the folly of wearing a sword" which should go down to posterity as a masterly satire. And yet he was grateful that any man's life should be spared.

Sentence had not yet been pronounced, but this must follow on the verdict. Nothing could arrest it. He disliked the notion of being again confronted with Page, but he consoled himself with the reflection that the proceedings would be strictly formal and would leave little if any scope for the display of an offensive personality. Being informed that it was customary to inquire of those convicted if they had anything to say which was a reason why sentence should not be passed, he occupied his mind with the preparation of a speech suitable to the occasion : it must be a simple and earnest appeal for mercy, and must not be infected with the slightest taint of rancour ; it must be the mirror of a mind absolutely unruffled by the terror of impending doom.

So while the gaolers peeped at intervals through the grille of the convict's cell to assure themselves of his safe condition, Savage was turning over the sentences which should compose his speech in court, rejecting all words which might sound the note of passionate revolt from a fate which he persuaded himself to regard as all the more natural in an unnatural world, because it was unmerited.

On Monday, the eleventh of December, the last day of the sessions and four days after the trial had taken place, he and James Gregory were once more brought to the bar. From the appearance of the court, it was like once more seeing the curtain lifted on a familiar scene : the same faces, the same attitudes, the same Judge. On the question being put to him, Savage, with his eyes calmly fixed on Page, began his address. The figure of the man he confronted seemed to grow less and less that of a human creature, and more and more a symbol of malignant force as the words came in slow and musical procession from his lips.

" It is now, my lord, too late," he said, " to offer anything by way of defence or vindication ; nor can we expect aught from your lordships in this Court but the sentence which the law requires you as judges to pronounce against men of our calamitous condition. But we are also persuaded, that as mere men, and out of this seat of rigorous justice, you are susceptive of the tender passions, and too humane not to commiserate the unhappy situations of those whom the law sometimes perhaps—exacts—from you to pronounce upon. No doubt you distinguish between offences which arise out of premeditation and a disposition habituated to vice or immorality, and transgressions which are the unhappy and unforeseen effects of a casual absence of reason and sudden impulse of passion. We therefore hope you will contribute all

you can to an extension of that mercy which the gentlemen of the jury have been pleased to show to Mr. Merchant, who (allowing facts as sworn against us by the evidence) has led us into this our calamity. I hope this will not be construed as if we meant to reflect upon that gentleman, or remove anything from us upon him, or that we repine the more at our fate because he has no participation of it: No, my lord! For my part, I declare nothing could more soften my grief than to be without any companion in so great a misfortune."

The applause in court with which the speech was greeted had to be spent rather than arrested, before the Judge could obtain fair hearing to pronounce sentence of death upon the prisoners, who were at once removed. The same morning Merchant was allowed benefit of clergy, was burnt with a hot iron in the brawn of the left thumb in the presence of the court, and, on giving security for his good behaviour, was discharged.

XX

No time was to be lost. The date fixed for their execution was in January, at the beginning of the new sessions. Those who thought it their duty to strain every nerve on behalf of Savage, now busied themselves about the presentation of his case to the only power which could save his neck from the noose. Gregory enjoyed the benefits of the influence which his companion possessed. Public feeling ran high in their favour. Alexander Pope sent Dr. Young with five guineas for poor Mr. Savage, and expressed an earnest desire to send five more if the unfortunate man lay in want of necessaries. Aaron Hill displayed a tender solicitude for the man whose melancholy career he had watched: was this to be the end? He shuddered at the thought of this high-minded youth hurled by a malignant stroke of fate amongst criminals, breathing an atmosphere poisoned with ribald jests and blasphemies. His sense of fairness revolted at the descriptions of the "malefactors" in the daily sheets. Malefactors! Many of their editors would have been fitter to swing from the gibbet, than the men they reviled. He welcomed the appearance of a sixpenny pamphlet published by Mr. Roberts with a rapidity

incompatible with accuracy but eminently valuable under the pressure of circumstances.

This *Life of Richard Savage* put the case for the condemned man with eloquence and sincerity. It had been hastily composed, probably by Mr. Beckingham and another writer, who no doubt visited Savage in Newgate. Their version placed the birth of the hero nearly a year later than it took place, supposed the Countess of Macclesfield to have made a public confession of adultery, and to have stated before Richard's birth that the child with which she was great was begotten by the Earl Rivers. It introduced a mean nurse ordered to breed the boy up as her own without allowing him to come to the knowledge of his real parents, and Lady Mason the benevolent grandmother, some letters from whom fell into the hands of the boy when his nurse died, revealing the secret of his birth.

This was a long way more explicit than the accounts of Savage's early life published before by Curll and Hill, and it contained more errors in fact, the marvellous element in the man's story carrying those who wrote of him into those loose statements and misstatements in matters of detail which are the invariable accompaniments of publicity. From the moment any man becomes a common topic of conversation, the genius of mythology pursues his name and strews the path of his career with the flowers of fancy, sometimes so thickly that the course of the

path itself is completely hidden. Thus the picture impressed upon the thousands of people who read this pamphlet and for no good reason assumed it to be sanctioned and approved in every detail by Savage himself, was not a picture of the real Richard Savage, but a faithful representation of what the writers on imperfect evidence supposed him to resemble. Included in the pamphlet was a letter from a noble lord who had discovered in Savage a mind incapable of evil; who had beheld him sigh for the distressed when more distressed himself; give that relief to others which not long before he himself had wanted. "Wretched from the womb," wrote this warm apologist, "robbed of two fathers, and who never yet was blessed with the smiles of a parent! Who that is born of woman can reflect on his fate and refuse a tear?"

Tears were indeed as ready to flow from the eyes of the readers, as sixpenny bits to leap from their pockets. The town could talk of nothing else. And in the meanwhile what was Savage doing in his cell? He saw the hand of death in act to clasp at his throat. In a little time, familiar streets, the blue sky, the voices of those he loved, the colours of nature, laughter and song, the pageant of society, would be withdrawn in the little act of suffocation. He saw himself, as from a remote height, watching the scene of his own execution: the tiny figure erect in scarlet by the gibbet, the parson, the hangman, the surging crowd. He heard the hoarse shouts interrupt his own

speech. He felt the rope at his throat and the plunge into a fathomless void.

He would be dressed in scarlet, for the central figure in the scene must be clearly distinguished, and he chose to regard it as a festival in his honour in which it behoved him to make a brave show. Of black he had had enough ; black was for sordid occasions—for the high, nodding plumes at funerals when it was the business of nature to attune herself to the slow-paced solemnity of the mourners, and it was right and fitting that rain should fall. But an execution was another matter—a matter for bright sunlight. He hoped to be hanged on a fine morning. With discourse on such things he entertained those who came to see him. They came in fear at the probable strain of talking with a condemned man ; they went away marvelling at a brain that worked so merrily in a head over which the rope was hanging so perilously near.

Nor was there anything saturnine about these ebullitions. The jest that on other lips would have seemed a tasteless mockery, sat decently on his. He looked wistful as he spoke, like one conscious of being wronged in a region inaccessible to any thought so banal as that of pardon or retribution ; and it was as if the deepness of the wrong conferred upon him the right to exercise a boundless merriment in the company of others ; for he viewed them across the deep chasm that separates a man condemned to die

from his fellow-creatures, and he made antics to spare them the impossible and humiliating task of shouting across the bottomless opening in a way that they might be misguided enough to think comprehensible to the isolated figure on the other side. There was nothing insincere in his demeanour. Only he felt that his heart would break, if he did not confine his emotions, like an actor, within the bounds of an assumed part.

And when he was left alone, and could no longer divert himself with the outward appearance of the world, it was as if the blood within him were crying for the presence of a near kinsman, some one made inalienably his by no random selection, such as governed the acquisition of friendship, but by the foolish, strong, unintelligible bond of the flesh, the thing that is sealed from discussion, the masterful reality of parentage, inexhaustible well of an affection surviving the vilest insults, the direst humiliations, disappointments, personal antipathies, mysterious inconsequences of words, thoughts, looks, deeds, from those on whom it feeds. He did not guess the depths of cruelty to which parentage may descend ; he only saw from the infinite misery of his privation the heights to which it may rise. Beauty of character seemed to him a little thing in his need, and to hear the words "My son" from the foulest strumpet of the town would as swiftly have brought into his eyes the tears for which he longed as a similar greeting from the saintliest lady on God's earth.

It was otherwise before the heaviness of his calamity was upon him. Then he had suffered himself to idealise the portrait of the mother whom he never knew, to find pretexts on which to make the cruelty of her conduct to him consist with the possession of a noble character. Now he cared not what she was, so as she came.

And she must come. Hitherto, guilty or innocent as she might be, she had acted in a cloud. But the knowledge of his present condition must have dispersed it. The sudden wind of this catastrophe had lifted the mist before her eyes, which could now behold him in a noontide glare of supplication. "Mother, O mother! come to me," was the burden of the message that struggled for utterance within him; "Come—before 'tis too late."

But when he took the pen in his hand, when the immensity of what lay at his heart dwindled to the practical necessity of writing a letter to Mrs. Brett, and taking such precautions as might ensure its delivery to her in person, he felt like a drunkard staggering blindly, with a blindness not his own, away from the light that glimmered at him in the distance, a faint promise of refuge and relief. The brain which groped after appropriate words seemed to lead him away from the truth they were designed to express. Words? How could words fail to misrepresent the agony of his soul? And yet words were all he had, to work the will that tortured and goaded him.

Writing to his friends was easier than talking to them. Writing this letter was the most difficult thing he had ever set himself to do. Every felicity of phrase was suspect ; the better it satisfied his literary judgment, the less it seemed a genuine, a legitimate method of expression. Yet something warned him that the simple message "Come" would be utterly unsuited to the lady for whom it was intended. The elemental call of nature was almost extinct in her. Moreover, so long as he lacked her presence and was unable to subdue the longing for it, he was glad to make this attempt at pourtraying the state of his mind from which all other matters receded. It seemed to him that he was less alone when he was trying to describe his loneliness in a letter to his mother. She was now the one person in the world in whose eyes he cared to justify himself. If she had injured him, what were these injuries in comparison with those which in his folly he had now inflicted on her? What mother would not shrink from looking into the eyes of a son who has deliberately taken a human life? Ah, but he had not done it deliberately. Therein lay the whole force of his appeal to her mercy. The penalty was a small thing ; the misrepresentation, if it was to cost him the only human solace that remained for him, was gross ; a sin beside the magnitude of which his own was a peccadillo. The law was very nice, a pretty toy in the hand of those who knew how to pull the strings ; but it ignored the secret and

mysterious motions of the soul. God alone knew what had impelled him to make that fatal thrust ; God was witness that he was no murderer. If it was necessary that he should touch the bottom of sorrow for the mother to awaken in her breast, he could say Amen to the prayers of whatever devil had lured him into this reckless conduct.

Savage wrote many letters before he could satisfy himself that further effort would take him none the nearer to framing his request in such a way as to make it impossible for Mrs. Brett to refuse. One letter seemed too passionate, another too formal ; one too importunate, another too abject. Again and again he tried to picture to himself in the cold light of probability the mind and the emotions of a mother thus addressed. Before the vision of the fury who had repulsed him he shut his eyes. He believed too deeply in the divine element in human nature to conceive the existence of a heart permanently inaccessible to pity.

At last, with the fragments of the rejected letters round him, he surveyed the final version of his appeal. It embraced a confession of wrong-doing, a repudiation of having done what would be assumed from their putting his life in forfeit. Like children playing a mock battle with a pistol stolen from a parlour wall, suddenly startled in the midst of their noisy frolic at the sound of a report, and dismayed at the sight of a playmate on the ground, he and his

companions had stumbled into the presence of death. On the word of a dying man he entreated her to acquit him of a guilty intention. His love for her had survived every other emotion. In it he recognised something which no sword either of circumstance or steel could rob of life. He would have her imagine a very agony of supplication—which was, that she should come to him. He would say nothing, do nothing which could increase her distress. He foresaw that she might experience difficulty in complying with his request. But what difficulty would not go down before the dictates of a compassion which had already been extended to him from so many directions that he was made bold to seek it from one more precious to him than all the rest ?

There are truths of spiritual relationship between mother and son, of which both may dimly perceive the existence underlying the daily misunderstandings and misrepresentations of life, without being able to utter that appeal which would strike the spark of reconciliation. To be articulate on the nature of these truths, is the gift of very few persons ; nor is it by word of mouth that their recognition is for the most part effected. The unexpected element in life shocks people into their discovery. So long as Savage, by his conduct, had done nothing to earn the reproaches of his mother, she had shown herself insensible to the affection of her son (so he now reasoned). By en-

forcing upon her the notice of his existence, he had been the means of disturbing the serenity of her own. She might feel in a blind sort of way that he was taking advantage unfairly of the weakness, the frailty, to which he owed his existence. His death would remove him within a little time from the scene of her life. This was to disencumber her of the fact of his existence more completely than any mother could wish. The motion of an outstretched hand must follow as an involuntary impulse from his lying for the first time so unreservedly at the mercy of her forgiveness. In the course of these reflections the brawl in the coffee-house began to assume for him an almost tangible significance. Was it the strange signal for which, without knowing it, the mother had been waiting, to discover in herself some tenderness for the fate of her son?

Savage enclosed the letter for Mrs. Brett in another addressed to Mr. Theophilus Cibber, the young actor who a few years before had impersonated the Earl of Somerset in the tragedy of "Overbury." He begged his friend to hand it to Mr. Wilks, in order that through him it might be presented to the lady.

"As to death," he wrote, "I am easy, and dare meet it like a man—all that touches me is the concern of my friends and a reconciliation with my mother—I cannot express the agony I felt when I wrote the letter to her. If you can find any decent excuse

for showing it to Mrs. Oldfield, do; for I would have all my friends (and that admirable lady in particular) be satisfied I have done my duty towards it. Dr. Young to-day sent me a letter most passionately kind."

XXI

Now that he was about to have done with life, it seemed to Savage that many people were in a desperate hurry to assign to him an importance which, as a poet whose death could not be counted on for many years, it would have been idle for him to exact. Death, above all the murderer's death, brought not only compassion but also distinction, or what the multitude called fame: "A poor poet, gentlemen, but hats off to death; for he has committed a murder and is to swing for it"—such was the popular spokesman's text.

Savage smiled as he reflected upon the nicety with which an astute publisher can measure the pulse of his public and supply the diet best suited to keep alive the fever without killing the patient. Across the breathless body of Sinclair he had stepped into the white glare of notoriety. Thousands of people were reading the biography of this Mr. Savage, warming their imaginations at the fireside of his calamity; Mr. Roberts, the publisher, was growing rich. To compass these good ends, the Savage in Newgate gaol had only to be convicted of murder. He was not one and the same Savage with the man

whose character was being impressed upon the public mind ; his thoughts and emotions corresponded hardly at all with any of those they supposed him to be experiencing. But what did that matter ? Everybody was very kind : Mr. Pope was kind ; Dr. Young was kind. So was Aaron Hill, who by a tender piece of writing is said to have brought tears into the eyes of the Queen as she read the pitiful case of Richard Savage.

Queen Caroline was kind. The late King had once spoken of her as "cette diablesse, madame la Princesse," but her aunt, the old Electress of Hanover, knew and liked her better. She declared this niece to be possessed of a heart, "a rare thing as times go." It was on the tenderness of this heart that the supporters of Savage now rested their hopes of obtaining a remission of the sentence passed on him. Mrs. Clayton, the Queen's Mistress of the Robes, took a charitable view of the case. Sir Robert Walpole had spent a delightful half-hour listening to the eloquent petition of Anne Oldfield, and watching her eyes, now moist with pity, now flashing with indignation as she spoke of Page, and again half closed in a mysterious and habitually languorous expression which seemed to invite comprehension. Many influences were now engaged to enlist the Queen's sympathy. She bent graciously to them, for acts of mercy were congenial to her, and her own distresses enabled her to feel acutely for others. The King was unfaithful to her, but he

was not impervious to her persuasion on impersonal matters. They were at the beginning of their reign, a time privileged for a more than usually generous exercise of the royal pardon. The considerateness with which the Queen listened to all that could be urged in Mr. Savage's favour promised well ; and sanguine hopes were being entertained that the unhappy issue might soon be averted, when Her Majesty's attitude towards the petitioners suddenly changed. She refused to be addressed on this subject.

What had happened ? Had some one blundered, been unduly importunate ? In conveying her wishes the Queen's voice had sounded not only resolution, but also contempt for those whom she was disappointing, as if they could not be fully acquainted with the character of the life they were striving to save. In spite of the command, curiosity prompted one bolder than the rest to revive the forbidden topic at a moment which surprised the Queen into discovering the reason for her change of front : the action for which Mr. Savage had been condemned might possibly admit of extenuation, but was that man a proper object of the King's mercy who had stolen into his mother's house in the night to try and murder her ?

Amazing Anne Brett ! His mother's house ? Did the blind passion for revenge upon the man who had molested her sweep her at last headlong into the admission of the blood-tie, so long, so steadfastly denied

to all who uttered a hint of it in her presence? Or did the admission creep into the story as it travelled across the lips of Anne Brett's friends to the ear of the Queen? In any case, the only answer granted to the condemned man by the woman whom in that solemn hour he addressed as mother and entreated for an act of compassion before he died, was to poison the good-will of those who might yet save him, by renewing an accusation, so preposterous even in the first moments of its excited utterance, that Savage had come to regard it as an irresponsible outburst. Happily he knew nothing of what was passing outside his cell, and only waited as the hours crept by for the sudden apparition of a lady, closely veiled, with outstretched hands.

Queen Caroline was now convinced that her interposition would be misguided. Her pity transferred itself from the condemned man to his unfortunate mother. The royal lady herself knew what bitterness could come from a rebellious son; and for the mother of Prince Frederick, the idea of a son wishing to kill his own mother was less inconceivable than for many other women. Violence in family relations was, alas! no unfamiliar element in the experience of the lady who had married into that family. To quarrel with their fathers, was a kind of dynastic tradition with the Georges. In the late King's cabinet lay the papers of Lord Berkeley's sinister proposal to convey the Prince of Wales (now His Majesty)

From a photograph by Emery Walker after the picture in the National Portrait Gallery by Charles Jervas.

QUEEN CAROLINE.

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to America, "whence he should never be heard of more." Queen Caroline herself had come upon these documents on her father-in-law's death only a few months ago, nor had she yet recovered from the shock of a discovery which had lent credibility to the story of the attempt to remove Savage when she read of it. To others such a plan might appear highly improbable. She had only too good reason to think differently. But by the light of the latest contribution to her conception of Savage's character, she wished the plan might have succeeded. Were it not better to rot in the plantations of Jamaica than to swing from the gibbet at Tyburn?

Nevertheless, the advocates of mercy were not to be silenced by fresh allegations against Richard Savage which, it was clear, must have been deliberately calculated to choke any attempts to save him. The viler these machinations, the graver became the duty of combatting them and exposing their motives. Among the Queen's Ladies of the Bedchamber none enjoyed a higher reputation for piety and sincerity than the Countess of Hertford. Soon after her marriage, more than ten years before this, she had entered the household of Caroline, then Princess of Wales. She liked literature, but she loved goodness; and those about her did not dispute her faculty for being on the right side and gravitating towards the right people in distressful issues. Nor was she content with the spiritual satisfaction to which her intuition

for virtue gave access. Injustice could make her passionately angry ; and the gentleness of her character, her reluctance to speak evil of others disappeared, or slumbered when she was placed in a situation calling for battle in defence of the right. The supporters of Savage could not have found one better qualified to make a final appeal to the Queen. If she failed to counteract the effect of these calumnies, then there would be small hope indeed.

When Lady Hertford was granted an audience, few people at Court knew that she entered the royal chamber with the concurrence of one who never before had lent such public, such conspicuous sanction to the proof of Anne Brett's malice in all that could touch the fate of Savage. This was Mrs. Brett's own nephew, Lord Tyrconnel, son of Dorothy Brownlow, the sister in whose house the Countess of Macclesfield had taken refuge for so many years after her separation.

As a little boy John Brownlow must have mistrusted his singular aunt ; but his parents were not the people to take much account of a child's impressions in such matters. Most families avoid, so long as possible, the disclosure of facts likely to stimulate criticism in the younger members. The reputation of many an uncle and aunt has been shattered only when nephews and nieces grow up ; the reputation of many a parent too. Yet, where boys and girls are dull or uninquiring, many an uncle and aunt, many a father and mother, are suffered to

go to their graves unsuspected, clothed in the attributes of commonplace respectability with which they have been invested by custom and the natural reticence of the elder members during long years.

But Lord Tyrconnel was not dull ; and his mind was by no means incurious. His childish mistrust of his mother's sister had ripened into strong suspicion as he grew to manhood. The honour of being related to this strange woman was one he by no means objected to divide, even at the expense of calling a bastard "cousin." Yet, until this attempt had been made to arrest the progress of mercy and drive Savage to an ignominious death, Tyrconnel had found no pretext for personal action in a matter which concerned him but remotely. Now it was otherwise, and he felt himself obliged to exercise an influence all the weightier, as he well knew, for his relationship with Anne Brett, in defence of a man whom she was content to persecute to death. Proof that she was the mother of Savage, could not be obtained ; but whatever view he was inclined to hold on that subject, it was foreign to the main issue. The man had never sought to take his aunt's life ; she clearly was seeking to take his. It was high time for a young man of spirit and honour to declare his principles, unless he wished, all his life, to bear a share in the consequences of allowing hers to go unchallenged.

Lady Hertford left the presence-chamber in a state of mingled joy and agitation. Her Majesty's pity for

the condemned man had arisen with redoubled force in the course of that interview; for it was impossible to doubt the good faith of this petitioner, and almost impossible not to suffer the difficulties, the improbabilities still inherent in the case, as it was presented, to be swept aside by the eloquence of arguments directed towards securing a postponement of the sentence. The figure of this incredible mother—if mother she was—this unscrupulous slanderer who could lie away the life of a fellow-creature, however misguided, swayed uncertain in Queen Caroline's mind. But the power of her opposition, which had asserted itself angrily at the outset of the interview, was gone.

On the nineteenth of December, just a week after sentence had been pronounced, Lord Tyrconnel presented his petition in favour of the prisoners to the King. A day later news was brought them that His Majesty had granted a reprieve *sine die*, in order that time might be gained for a further consideration of their case.

XXII

Reprieve by no means implied a pardon. It was not long since the difficulty of deciding a minute point had carried a man indicted for murder through nearly two years of suspense, at the end of which he had been ordered to be executed. But when they came to fetch him to his doom, they found him dead in his bed with a severed artery : he had preferred suicide to a public hanging ; justice had recoiled upon her own decree, and the law had been made a mockery.

The punishment so far undergone by Savage and his companion was indeed out of proportion to their crime ; for what is the sudden pain of a mortal thrust through the body in comparison with the agony of waiting through hours that creep on leaden feet for the elaborate ceremonial of a public execution ? There were moments in which Savage wished the gaoler would steal upon him in some fitful interval of sleep, from which he might wake but for an instant, to feel the rope at his throat and then know the unspeakable.

When they told him of the reprieve, his imagination seemed to have been petrified, and it was some time before he became sensible of a lightening in the load which each day had increased, but each day had fitted

him more ably to bear. He had prayed long and regularly, not for release, but for grace to bear himself with fortitude and dignity. When he was not praying, the stream of a grotesque satire ran briskly in him, and he was making a will, bequeathing all kinds of things which he did not possess to persons in high stations whom he did not know. He had ordered his clothes for the day of his execution, and he was ready to enter on a minute and learned discussion of the coffin most appropriate to the man and his destiny. The material objects of the world he was about to forsake had acquired for him novel and strange values. He was like a man in a dream, touching and seeing things to the accompaniment of an undervoice which sought continuously to impress upon him that he was dreaming, dreaming all the time, and that the surfaces felt by his hands and the sights beheld by his eyes were neither graspable nor visible. The conflict between such a message and the reality of the impressions experienced, never came to a crisis ; but it was as if he were freed from the responsibility of directing his thoughts, and could let them float like a rudderless ship on a boundless sea. It was something to thank God for, that his misfortune or his crime (it mattered nothing which it might really be in this connexion) had uplifted him into a region of speculation where the properties of the world—houses, clothes, food, a room, a sword, a table, a jug of water—were toys in some marvellous game of which he was a privileged

spectator without fully understanding all the moves that were made.

And then, just as he was eagerly absorbed in watching, secure from the temptation to disturb by a sudden wanton shake of the body, the fine web of this hallucination, his mind had been dislocated by the announcement of the tiny fact that the date of his execution was to be shifted. Why should they have troubled to tell him? Of course his friends were loud in their assertions that the postponement meant pardon, but that was only a deceitful form of kindness to which he was by now accustomed. To acknowledge that a man was to be taken and throttled before the gaze of a yelling crowd of men and women by the order of His Majesty, would be an act of impropriety which nobody could be asked to perpetrate. The element of truth had as little to do with the reassurances of friends to a condemned man, as it had with the criminal's plea of "Not guilty" to the indictment for a crime which he knows he has committed.

But when, some weeks later, the reprieve was converted into a pardon, and from an object of commiseration he suddenly became a hero, loaded with no irons but with the difficult duty of maintaining a grave demeanour under the stream of congratulation which poured upon him, his mind fell precipitately from the heights on which it had laboured and his behaviour was like that of a child in a state of convalescence after a dangerous illness. His wits forsook

him ; to those who had befriended him he found himself unable to say anything in reference to what had taken place.

When he spoke at all, it was of trifles ; and the conversation to which he accorded feverish welcome, concerned the little functions of each day : the buttoning of a coat, the ordering of a meal, the orderly as well as the agreeable position of his limbs when he lay down to sleep. To resume this habit, which had been broken by the hard usages of the prison, afforded him extravagantly deep satisfaction ; and the night after the news of his pardon had been conveyed to him was one which he never forgot. He no longer heard the harsh grating of bars, the creaking of heavy doors, the hoarse echo of voices from distant vaults, the hollow-ringing footsteps of the gaoler on stone floors ; he trod a silent garden enamelled with flowers painted many colours in the morning's earliest light, and as he went, the homely earth looked supernaturally fair. It was bitterly cold when at last his eyes opened reluctantly upon the familiar squalor of his cell, but summer still sang in his heart a wild length of melody from which no dungeon cold or gloom could take the sweetness.

It was the twentieth of January when Savage and his companion were released on bail from Newgate. On the fifth of March they pleaded the King's pardon, and the case was at an end.

XXIII

But for the fame of Richard Savage, the name of James Gregory would not have survived. Yet the obscurer man was none the less to be pitied. He obtained a post in the Customs at Antigua, where he died, and he is said to the last to have held a very lenient opinion of the friend's share in that folly which went near to costing both of them their lives. It is highly possible that Mr. Gregory was a better man than Mr. Savage, nor does the latter's title to attention from the biographer constitute a moral superiority over the former. On the other hand, the poet's gift of expression is always apt to rouse suspicions of his sincerity in the case of one whose life, from no fault of his own, must be pursued in the twilight of grave misfortunes.

What Savage felt at the time of his liberation is uttered with bitter accuracy in his poem *The Bastard* which he inscribed " with all due reverence " to Mrs. Brett, once Countess of Macclesfield. To wish that the poem had not been written, is to lament that the poet ever existed. Had he been an ordinary man in similar circumstances, he must have been debarred the pleasure of refining his grief in the process of an attempt to

reflect it in verse. But it would be unwise to assume that his choice of a theme from which more delicate minds would have shrunk, in which the ordinary man could not have perceived the material for poetry, implies a lack of sensibility. He was a man at war with himself no less than with his fate. The cynic which he had hoped himself to be when he had begun the poem some time ago in a strain of caustic raillery, had withered within him under the blow inflicted by Mrs. Brett, whose pitiless indifference to his appeal from the prison, as he now learned, had prevented him from suspecting the still more terrible truth, that she had not scrupled, by the most infamous lie, to come between him and the Queen's mercy. Hatred such as this, was a thing to strike other men dumb with amazement. But Savage was like an animal at bay turning at last to face the persecutor, moved to utter the final cry that should bespeak farewell to the hope which it had taken this to kill in him.

That he could write down what he felt, however much chilled the emotions became in the process of giving them an artificial form in measured lines—that he could make a little song of this mighty sorrow—seems like an act of cowardice, and may well suggest insincerity. To grieve in silence, at least to keep his sorrow in its freshness from the scrutiny of his muse, would have been less worldly, and more like pure heroism. But his patience was exhausted, outraged.

The crimes of this mother were no longer private matter. In the very month of his release had appeared *Nature in Perfection, or the Mother Unveiled*, a congratulatory poem "to Mrs. Brett upon His Majesty's Gracious Pardon granted to Mr. Richard Savage, son of the late Earl Rivers." The style of this attack, which spared neither the mother nor the daughter—and against the daughter Savage had no ground of complaint—was crude and ill-judged; and, as it bore the name of no author, Savage was fully aware that it would be credited to him. Even the melancholy privilege of presenting his woes through the medium of his own poetry was, then, to be stolen from him. Public misrepresentation would increase his difficulties and alienate the sympathies of many whose interest it was his duty to court. His dream of solitude was no more than a dream. Richmond Hill had become as remote as Mount Sinai. A vague prospect of relief glimmered for him in the disinterested nobility of Tyrconnel's conduct; his case had been canvassed in high circles; glittering misfortune had made of him a public figure; he felt himself called upon to improve the occasion.

But first he must have done with this mother; the shifting emotions which her conduct had aroused in him must be calmly surveyed; she was a part of his life to face; for by no evasion could he extinguish that legacy of pain which for him had been the only bequeathal. Entreaty, besides being ineffectual, was

degrading, culpably weak. Others had made it no longer possible for this woman to pose as the victim of an impostor. It remained for her son to bid her a public farewell. Impelled by these considerations, in the April following his release he published *The Bastard*. The poem is introduced by a short preface in prose, of which the sentiments display a lofty detachment, as if the writer had raised himself to an elevation far removed from all sense of personal injury. The first half of the poem represents him, in a gay mood of satire, extolling the advantages of base birth, and boasting in a line—which, for many people, is all that has survived oblivion in the work of Savage—that he is

> No tenth transmitter of a foolish face.

This part of the poem contains the impassioned address to Mrs. Brett "O mother, yet no mother," and contrasts the freedom of the bastard with the sluggish comfort of those born in a wedlock of faint compliance. The strain of satire thus pursued is rudely broken in the second half, in which the poet rejects the philosophy of what he has so far written, and plunges into a lament of his present distresses. The memory of dead Sinclair, robbed of his rage but (for the man who struck the blow) made more fertile in reproach by a consideration of its abiding consequence, begets a repentant mood ; but repentance comes too late. The pain at what has been done, is undying. He returns

to the subject of his birth, but this time with the quiet despair of one upon whom sorrows sharp and numberless have fallen. The note of defiance has died out; what is to become of the man over whose head no mother bent in prayer when he was a child, whom no father guided away from the paths of vice as he grew to manhood? To what end has the royal mercy saved him from the hangman? He bids farewell to one miscalled "mother," to whom he traces all his afflictions. No longer her son, born to a new life, he claims the adoption of the royal lady to whose merciful intervention he owes his life, and with a conventional tribute to that great lady the poem comes to a close.

Mrs. Brett was in Bath when *The Bastard* made its appearance. It is said that the extravagance of its reception recoiled upon her with such severity, that she could not appear in the public promenades without being insulted by persons who accosted her with quotations from the poem; and that before long she was driven to take refuge in London, where she could more easily conceal herself from public notice. So great was the satisfaction with which, in later life, Savage would tell the story of his mother's embarrassment, that most likely he exaggerated the particulars by a practice common to those who have a talent for embroidering a simple anecdote with a lively wit in the narration of it. Between this and deliberate forgery of facts lies a difference which will not be overlooked by those accustomed to study and compare

the speeches of public characters at different periods of their lives.

In a few months *The Bastard* had run through five editions. It had been sold for a trifling sum ; and the bookseller who produced it reaped enough profit to encourage the author in the belief that his talents were now recognised, and that in future he would find little difficulty in selling his work for amounts which would maintain him on a decent if not a luxurious scale of living. That he should owe his success to the happy pourtrayal of an incurable and singular misfortune at a crisis in his private life which in another person he would not have hesitated to stigmatise as "vulgar," was accepted by Savage as part of that heritage of irony to which he was growing accustomed. Of his own abilities he always had a high opinion, nor is he to be blamed for applauding the judgment of the world when it showed approbation of his writings, and treating it with some contempt when it ignored them. The simple way in which to explain the failure of any written thing to interest the public is to trace the cause of neglect to the written thing itself. But this way cannot honestly be said to account for all the failures and all the successes ; nor is there better ground for believing that in these matters the publisher is always faultless and the author always fatuously vain, than for assuming the converse proposition. Savage's weakness lay less in condemning the popular verdict when he failed, than in ascribing

to it the merit of penetration when he succeeded. His vanity never allowed him to see that more than half the fame acquired for him by *The Bastard* was due to the nature of the subject and the association of its author with a figure, supposed, by a natural excess in the popular imagination, to combine an unusual quantity of vice, violence, and unorthodox opinion.

About this time appeared a new edition of the *Miscellanies*, including the biographical preface by Savage which had been deliberately torn from some copies of the earlier edition, and was now made all the more piquant for readers by the revelations concerning Mrs. Brett with which they had since become familiar. In fact, the experts in notoriety scented money in Mr. Savage's utterances; and it is a matter for wonder that his tragedy was not revived in all haste. Would not the town, ingeniously tickled by frequent paragraphs about the singular history of the author, have flocked to the playhouse with an alacrity which must have delighted the managers?

But if there was money in Savage's work, in Savage himself there was as little money as ever. While he was in prison, he had been loaded with gifts which he had shared generously with Gregory. Now that he was a free man, the muscles of other men's charity stiffened. They would open their purses, so Savage argued, to enable a man to eat and drink, so long as he was doomed to die on the morrow; but to a man

without any substantial means for keeping life together they felt no further obligation than was involved in the extension of an occasional invitation to dinner. Their hospitality complicated the case more than ever ; for when he was dining at the tables of the rich, Savage entirely forgot the difference between his own station and theirs. Servility was alien to his nature, social intercourse a distinguishing feature of his genuis. He gave himself up without any effort to the gaiety and the splendour of the moment, and never suffered his appreciation of luxury and plenty to be dashed by the memory of former privations or the prospect of those to come.

Level thinking can only be maintained by level living ; and the mind of a man who has hungered and shivered with cold for a week, performs a somersault on the one night at the end of such an ordeal when he buys for himself all the luxury and all the meat which the rich are in the habit of enjoying on every day in every year. Savage made no attempt whatever to equalise his days. With fifty pounds received now and again from kindly Anne Oldfield, he might have led the life of an industrious scholar, too proud to solicit help, too scholarly to win the favour of the multitude, very poor but very resolute, great in his obscurity and in the immovable pursuit of a noble if restricted ideal of intellectual experience. But this was no life for the author of *The Bastard*. When he was penniless,

he condemned the folly of the world for neglecting him. When he had a few guineas in his pocket, when good wine loosened the limbs of his wit and he sat surrounded with a crowd of admirers, he applauded the wisdom of the world in listening to his sallies. Thus his opinions veered like a weathercock with the wind of his fortunes. He belonged to those who sing songs at their own sweet will without heeding the laws of debtor and creditor; people whom a far greater poet than Savage had described more than two centuries before; people with wits just a little bewildered. In times of prosperity he was brilliant, arrogant, merciless in the play of a satirical wit; in times of adversity he had within him the power to exercise the highest virtue, so that his conduct excites surprise as well as admiration. By the action about to be described he claims a new kind of attention from that until now aroused by the vicissitudes of his life.

XXIV

He was alone, with a guinea in his pocket, and before him the unending problem of obtaining a livelihood when this coin was spent. It was evening. The company with whom he had dined had broken up, and he found himself wonderfully solitary. The activities of other men centred in some tangible object, which gave to each an intelligible place in the world. Their business was very dull, and in gayer spirits he often took pleasure in ridiculing the air of importance with which they spoke of the smallest affairs; but there were moments (and this was one of them) in which the poet wearied of his isolation, and wished humbly enough that he too might share in these healthy illusions; wished that, instead of criticising life, he might live; that his day might be filled, from sunrise to sunset, with the study of plans for building harbours or lighthouses, or with some other public work which exhausted the brain and left no leisure for speculative philosophy. Civic distinction, or a wife, seemed to him to give to others that certainty of outlook which he coveted for himself; a kind of peace of mind which no passing distress could be strong enough permanently to disable. Small men needed the wife; great men

the distinction; Savage had no doubt as to the class to which he himself belonged. But in his present depression, had he chanced upon a friend intimate and sensible enough to divine the sentiment underlying his reflections, Savage would have chosen to mention the most foolish of their common acquaintances who were married, and upon this dull instance of connubial bliss have reared a monument in rhetoric to matrimony. To have been taken literally, would have infuriated him, for he had no wish to marry. But he would have enjoyed playing the game of "pretending" with some one who could see through the pretence and enjoy the humours of an idle conversation to which it would have lent opportunity.

As it was, no friend came his way. The names of several occurred to him; but on considering each in turn he found some plausible reason for assuming that a visit from him at that hour would be ill timed. The world, even his own little world of men and women, was complete without him. He began to think more narrowly of his own plans. How should he expend his guinea? There were taverns, but they did not tempt him. He was in no mood for public recognition in any building resembling the place in which his recent calamity had come upon him. The shops were shut, or he might have found at the tailor's a set of buttons to tickle his fancy. The oddness of his predicament began to amuse him, as he still wandered through the dim-lit streets. Rich

men were never at a loss to know how to dispose of a guinea; here was a man whose whole fortune was in his pocket, who could think of no congenial way to rid himself of it. He smiled to himself, and as he smiled he observed the face of a woman peering deliberately at him, but with an expression so melancholy, that he set instantly to wonder what ailed her. She looked not so much ill as hopeless, as if she were running she knew not whither, to avoid she hardly knew what, except that it was something from which, when it came near, every man and woman fled as by an irresistible impulse.

For a few seconds only Savage stood still without advancing, afraid by too precipitate a movement to scare her from the precincts of his pity before he could tell her of his wish to help her. But his fear was groundless; for at the first step he took towards her, she ran up to him, and a voice terribly familiar sounded in his ears. Yet his compassion for her distress swiftly overcame the shock of his discovery that this was Jane Leader, the woman with Sinclair's party on that fatal night in Robinson's tavern. Malignantly she had given false evidence against him in the trial; but the memory of her utterance in the court, passionate and vile as it had been, melted as suddenly as it had rushed in upon the man she would have helped to hang. As he stood now listening to her miserable tale of want, he saw in her face and eyes the signs of hunger that he knew too well; and the

voice in which he rebuked her for what she had done was so gentle, the look of compassion on his face so wistful, that the words were not answered. He seemed indeed to be speaking almost like a child in its sleep, with an involuntary sadness ; and her head drooped as he bade her wait while he ran into a tavern to change his guinea. When he returned, she was once more erect and was staring across the street in the direction from which he had come. Thrusting half a guinea into her hand, which he pressed slightly in token of forgiveness, he passed swiftly from her neighbourhood, as if unwilling to let her thanks break in upon the stillness of his heart. This act, which, it has been said, in some ages would have made a saint, will never be surpassed as an example of compassion. Often indeed, in the course of his wild life, Richard Savage mistook the love for the practice of virtue, but no evil that he did can cloud the serenity of this good—a little, thoughtless act, the outcome of a divine impulse ; soon done, never to be forgotten, shining like a star out of a dark firmament of folly.

XXV

Lord Tyrconnel's hatred of his aunt was by no means exhausted by the success with which she had been outwitted in her criminal scheme. He appreciated every shade of satire in *The Bastard*, and could feel no indignation with the author for publishing it. Nevertheless, he felt convinced that these public attacks on Mrs. Brett must be stopped. A man of Savage's ability had richer veins of poetry to explore and to exploit than this ; and it was tiresome to be publicly branded as the nephew of a woman who submitted in silence to be a subject for ridicule and vituperation. That the attacks upon her would cease without his intervention, seemed highly improbable : here was a desperate man, without any means of support, suffering himself to make a base use of his misfortunes in order to rise above them. Of course it was wrong in Savage to offer his resentment for sale and allow it to be openly asserted that Mrs. Brett had only to give him a pension and he would cease to molest her. But when Tyrconnel asked himself what he would do in similar circumstances, he found no satisfactory answer to the question. Of Savage's relation to Mrs. Brett he could be no more certain

than the rest of the world ; but if, as Steele had written, the poet, in view of his misfortunes, had a claim to call every good man his father, the remoter relationship of cousin could be admitted without challenge ; and it was consistent with Tyrconnel's character, now that he had turned into a public advocate for Savage, to take more than the full responsibility of his action and seek to acquaint himself personally with the man made conspicuous, and, to many persons, an object of mistrust and suspicion, by misfortune and persecution.

Most people run away from romance, unless it is presented to them in the comfortable form of a bound volume which can be shelved at any moment when the practical demands of life claim attention. Lord Tyrconnel ran towards romance, pitch-forked himself into a situation abounding in romantic developments. As for the consequences, he was as content to hang them as his aunt would have been happy to hang the man from whom they were to spring. Nor would it be accurate to regard Lord Tyrconnel's action on behalf of Savage as the immature ebullition of a youth with a craving for sensation ; for he was happily married and rich enough to enjoy the luxuries of a splendid establishment. To these luxuries he now proposed to add the literary embellishment of Mr. Savage's presence at a remuneration of two hundred pounds a year.

Savage was not surprised when the proposal was conveyed to him ; he was only delighted. The

negotiations were conducted with the strictest regard to punctilio and delicacy. John, Viscount Tyrconnel, Baron Charleville and Lord Brownlow, was careful to emphasise the honour which Mr. Richard Savage would do him in consenting to form a part of his establishment. Nor was Savage less adroit than the other in the exercise of ceremonies which he had long wished to display on some great occasion. The approach to every detail of the business was paved with civilities like the red carpets that make avenues from the street into mansions on the night of a reception.

The subject of Mrs. Brett might easily have dislocated the friendly understanding which improved with every fresh meeting of the patron and the poet ; but Savage was quick to perceive the danger and avert it by conduct which satisfied Tyrconnel at once of his ability and of his candour. Out of chivalry for the lady, no less than out of consideration for her nephew, he confessed his wish to avoid all mention of her both in his work and in conversation. Could they not exercise the privileges of friendship without calling each other cousin ? 'Twere far better so.

To Tyrconnel there was something exquisitely gratifying in the whole situation. He was but a few years older than Savage ; Mrs. Brett was his mother's sister, and the inequalities of fortune called indeed for some readjustment by one lucky enough to be the son of the good sister on behalf of one miserable

enough to own, or at least misguided enough to claim, the parentage of the wicked sister. The disparity between the two young men was not only in the fact that the one possessed titles and many acres of land in Lincolnshire, while the other was a beggar without even the indisputable claim to a name; but also in the gross difference distinguishing a tender mother from a woman for whom motherhood seemed to provide an additional incentive to cruelty.

From his dark cavern of oppression and poverty Savage now emerged into the bright sunlight of prosperity. The immediate circumstances to which he owed his preferment were never entirely forgotten by him, and in his reluctance to enter upon any conversation bearing directly upon his trial might be detected an abiding sense of responsibility for what had happened—a responsibility sometimes finding utterance in his poetry when the mood of repentance stole unawares upon him with the pen in his hand. But the resignation which distinguished Savage in adversity acquired a fatalist value for him in his general attitude toward the stages through which he had passed to this sudden elevation. These were inscrutable, and he was tempted to assume, inevitable; it had not been in his power to command the success which he never ceased to think was his due, and was bound sooner or later to come to him. Now it had come, this was no time to analyse its constituents. He looked forward to a period of uninterrupted

distinction, by which he was to justify the prophecies of his friends and that inner conviction of his own worth which had sustained him in so many perils and calamities. He had battled long and at fearful odds, but in the end he had conquered. No longer at the mercy of other people's compassion, no longer exposed to the humiliation of courting the society of his inferiors for what they could give him, or else starving, he had found the perfect conditions for the exercise of his talents and the play of his personality. Tyrconnel was too noble by nature, too obviously fascinated by his cousin's charm of manner, to wish to restrict any of his ambitions : was not Tyrconnel the chosen instrument for his delivery out of bondage, the kinsman united to him no less firmly by the fire of indignation which Anne Brett had kindled in them both, than by the tie of blood which they owed to her existence ?

It was a singular relation in which they stood to each other, but Savage had been long familiar with singularity ; it was indeed a natural element in the progress of great minds that the careers of their owners should be singular. For instance, Dr. Young, who had visited Savage in prison, was almost fifty years of age when he had taken orders ; and he was now Chaplain to the King. What a singular departure for a master in satire ! Aaron Hill, a writer so versatile that it was always a delightful and a difficult problem to guess in what new department of literature he was

about to make his appearance, was engaged about this time in teaching the natives of Scotland to float rafts down the Spey, in furtherance of a scheme by which Scotland was to fashion her navy from her own timber.

Savage's sympathy with the activities of his friends revived with increased vigour after the good-bye which the imminence of his death had summoned into all his thoughts of them. Now they were doubly dear and doubly near to him: the busy merriment of the Cibbers, of Wilks, and of Mrs. Oldfield seemed to him richer and more precious than before it had formed part of the great gift of life bequeathed to him in his pardon. At the thought of Steele, upon whom death was creeping, he grew sad. In the career of Thomson, whose *Winter* had won for him the friendship of the Countess of Hertford, Savage took a keen and a generous interest, for he was well acquainted with the indolent poet, and had included in his collection of miscellanies the poem which was the germ of Thomson's immortality in *The Seasons*. And the success of Thomson nursed in Savage the old ambition of which the fruits were just beginning to appear in his work at Richmond. With a gravity deepened by the past, he began once more to devote his time to the poem which in the year 1729, introduced by an outspoken expression of gratitude and appreciation in the dedication to Lord Tryconnel, made its appearance as *The Wanderer; a Vision in Five Cantos*.

XXVI

As a picture of Savage's aspirations *The Wanderer* is a valuable performance. It was his largest, his most ambitious work. The thousand and more couplets abound in the colours of natural scenery, painted with an exuberance, a pleasure in variegated brightness which the best poetry of this period does not reflect. The religious philosophy of the poem emerges with some difficulty from the forest of such descriptions in which it is set ; it is a philosophy of pious resignation and ascetic renunciation. Wealth and wisdom are nowhere in the poem presented as companions. Science is honoured in a tribute to Halley, who was engaged in perfecting the lunar theory ; industry is celebrated in the rising of Venice from a watery world ; religion in the ornate chapel raised by the hermit to the memory of his dead wife, Olympia. The conversations between the hermit and the wanderer introduce a great number of topics connected by the train of loose speculation running through the poem. They include murder and suicide, the conflict between love and reason, the frequent illustration of good coming out of evil. The voices of the speakers sound

always from an elevation, occasionally with a vehemence which seems to betray the fact that the author had not the long habit of undisturbed familiarity with high regions. Yet it is impossible to imagine that there was anything artificial in the nobility of Savage's thoughts while he composed this poem. Those who knew him recognised in many a couplet the careful enshrinement of a personal experience, the express articulation of some sentiment dimly discernible in the flashes of his conversation, which even in his gayest moods sparkled all the brighter for an admixture of intellectual reserve. In writing a poem of this length and licence, no presence of either persons or circumstances could successfully militate against the passion for free utterance; and so it happened very naturally that, as he was engaged on a denunciation of lust, the seed of bitter thought, he drifted into a pitiless exposition of the fate pursuing the children of vice, doomed to mourn through life, or else be murdered to preserve their parents from scandal. "Ye cruel mothers!" he wrote; and then, by a strong effort, interrupted the progress of the words to ask himself if "cruelty" and "mother" could stand so near without a violation of nature's law. The undying memory of his wrongs had almost swept him into writing what would have been a breach of the understanding on which he had entered Tryconnel's house. But the restraint which he put upon himself was not wasted; and the passage remains

a more touching memorial of his sorrows than any of the invective he had used on other occasions.

For the long labour of polishing and punctuating his couplets, and steering his muse through this crowded labyrinth of images and illustrations, Savage enjoyed the high reward of Mr. Pope's encomium. The satirist read *The Wanderer* thrice, and admitted that his pleasure was improved on each successive occasion ; he must have bowed to the eloquence of that tribute to his own genius which made a conspicuous passage in Savage's poem. In Pope's association with Savage from this time, the linking of a master with a type in literature, lies a human satire which never found its way into the works of either. When *The Wanderer* appeared, a year had passed since Pope had issued his first edition of *The Dunciad*, in which the master's critics had been exposed in the pillory of his satire. The dunces danced with humiliation and rage. How many of them suspected that Pope had been primed by Savage with the material for their destruction ? The air grew thick with recriminations. It was a magnificent battle of invective, in the course of which the editions of *The Dunciad* were multiplied and the poem was varied to suit different stages of the controversy. When Eusden, the Poet Laureate, died in 1730, and Colley Cibber was appointed in his place, Pope promptly raised Colley to the throne of the dunces. The conventions of conduct among literary men have changed since then ; and Mr. Swin-

From a photograph by Emery Walker after a plaster bust painted to imitate life, probably by Louis F. Roubillac, in the National Portrait Gallery.

COLLEY CIBBER.

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burne published no *Alfred the Little* to celebrate the advent of the late Lord Tennyson's successor. To-day it is the conspiracy of silence that kills, and not a chorus of vituperation.

There are advantages in the older method, but for which Savage would never have written his most brilliant piece of work, *An Author to be Let.* He had good grounds for hoping, nay expecting, his own appointment as Poet Laureate ; for Lord Tyrconnel had given him a letter of warm recommendation to Mrs. Clayton, the Queen's Mistress of the Robes, who had befriended him while he was under sentence ; and Mrs. Clayton took pride in redeeming merit from obscurity. The King liked Savage's poetry, and made no secret of his intention to bestow on Savage the place made vacant by the death of Eusden. But disposal of this office lay, not with the sovereign but with the Lord Chamberlain ; and the influence exercised in support of Savage was wasted by being expended in the wrong quarter. Pope's rapid device for humiliating the Lord Chamberlain's nominee by raising him to the throne of the dunces succeeded so well, that Savage was content to leave Colley Cibber in this pre-eminent place of ridicule without further comment ; but he was eager to write something which should at once proclaim his continued admiration of Pope and his contempt for his adversaries. In fact he saw a chance to shine in great company, and was quick to grasp it. Dr. Young had satirised the

authors of the day in a couple of epistles prefixed to a new edition of *The Dunciad*. Savage added to it his prose satire on the hireling in letters in *An Author to be Let*.

The flight from the Olympic regions of *The Wanderer* to the low neighbourhood of Grub Street, which he described with pitiless malevolence, was characteristic of the man who had now reached a position of security from which to deride the trade of letters and the servility of hack writers. But for the grace of God, he himself might have served in that miserable army. Yet he wrote with no sense of thankfulness that even the pains of poverty had not prevailed to corrupt the integrity of his genius. Mr. Pope himself, born and bred in easy circumstances, and basking in the affluence which had come with his translation of Homer, could not have shown less mercy for the starving mediocrity which Savage held up to ridicule. Many years after the publication of this piece, a greater writer than Savage (and a far greater man) claimed for him that it afforded proof of a merit which would have done honour to the greatest names ; but, with a lasting consequence, the same critic struck a blow at the author's moral character in pointing out that there were passages in the work such as might well have been written by the prostitute scribbler whom it satirised. Some of the pitch used with masterly dexterity to pourtray a black world had stuck, still sticks, to the character of Savage.

Nevertheless, between *The Wanderer* and *An Author to be Let* lies all the difference that separates literary achievement from literary aspiration. The obscurity in the poem was so radical, that Savage himself could never see it. The simplicity of the prose satire was so artless, that it was easy for the author to see it and yet not see how much it meant. He enjoyed the satisfaction of watching his victims writhe under the poisoned arrows of his invective ; he missed the enjoyment of the larger triumph which lay in the success with which, in his Iscariot Hackney, he had crystallised a type. So long as the journalist without a conscience continues to flourish (and there is at present no sign of his mortality), wherever he is to be met (and there is no ground for supposing that his activity is subject to geographical boundaries), Hackney must remain his literary embodiment. And, to give life to his ridicule, Savage did not hesitate to make use of facts and distinguishing features in the lives of those with whom he had been led into an easy and treacherous familiarity by the meanness of his own condition. In his preface he boldly calls each mediocrity by his name, telling one that the selling of fish would better become one whose mother was an oyster-woman than the profession of letters ; another, that the blacking of boots was a more respectable trade than the blacking of reputations. He denies that the son of an undertaker has any claim to compassion because his jokes fall flat ; this must ever be the case so long as he does not print his face

with his joke ; the fellow has missed his vocation—to bear a link and a mourning staff at a funeral. As for the popular lady novelist of the day, when she ceased to be a strolling actress, ought she not to have turned washerwoman rather than, by her stories of intrigue, have taught young heiresses the art of running away with fortune-hunters ? With a succession of similar insults this preface prepares the way for the autobiography of Iscariot. Neither poverty nor parentage were spared the lash. Into the wounds already inflicted by Pope, Savage rubbed the salt of his own arrogant malice. If the dunces had burned Pope in effigy, it was not to be from a feeling of gratitude for the exhibition of greater mercy in the smaller man, that they should abstain from paying Savage a similar compliment.

XXVII

The dunces did not burn him in effigy, but the fashionable world ran after him. All the splendour of personal distinction, so ardently coveted since he was a boy, fell now like a golden shower upon him in the bloom of life. He wore the spangled cloak of celebrity with the ease of one whose shoulders needed no sudden touch to bring out the graceful folds in the garment. Whatever he did, was an example for imitation ; whatever he said, an object of competitive eulogy. His clothes became the study of all who wished to be credited with an elegant and magnificent taste. His appearance in any public assembly lent importance to the people who composed it. Without any of the devices by which men make themselves conspicuous, his figure became the predominant feature of interest in a company even before it was known who he was. The slowness with which he moved was not the pace of a lazy man, but the deliberate gait of an active body of which the muscles were under perfect control. His smile seemed to travel far beyond the person to whom it chanced on any particular occasion to be addressed. With his entrance into company his own cares and reflections vanished, and in the unreserved surrender

of his mind to other people's concerns lay part of that difference between them and him which proclaimed itself outwardly in an air of involuntary detachment from those in his immediate neighbourhood—not the detachment of one who is self-conscious to the verge of hysteria, but its Antipodes, the detachment of one whom no vicissitudes of social experience can make unquiet. For how can personal disquiet arise where the person is always maintained in exquisite subordination to the scene?

And Savage possessed this art of subordinating himself to a degree which justly entitled him to social pre-eminence. Not that in the glamour of the great entertainments which enlarged the area of his fame he relaxed the vigilance of his observation. On the contrary, it was when the wine sparkled and the tide of conversation flowed free and strong that his mind was most on the alert for the discovery of those small tokens of human nature—the choice of a word, a passing gesture—which light up character with a sudden flash for those who are swift enough to discern it. Most men, under the influence of a merriment as engaging, as subtly infectious as Savage's, forget that the man who delights them may be watching them.

Not only at Lord Tyrconnel's, but also at the houses of other noblemen who courted and caressed him, Savage enjoyed the opportunity of observing statesmen and men of letters with a freedom and a familiarity from which he knew how to extract the full intellectual

value. He noted, with a satisfaction not always silent, the difference between the characters of the men he met at the dinner-table in the intimacy of domestic life and the characters they were popularly supposed to possess by those who only had access to them in official hours. To form conclusions as to what men were like from their public lives, was as misleading a process as to judge of an author's career from his published works. He remembered how, at a time when he was living much in the company of the poet Thomson, he had heard a lady say that she could gather three parts of his character from his works : that he was " a great lover, a great swimmer, and rigorously abstinent," whereas Thomson knew not any love but that of the sex, was perhaps never in cold water in his life, and indulged himself in all the luxury that came within his reach. In fact it was difficult to imagine a character which differed more completely from Thomson's than this, so vigorously misconceived by the admirer of his writings. Thomson an athlete ! Was this the indolent man who cut his books with a snuffer ? This the man who rose at noon and ate the sunny side off his peaches with his hands in his pockets ?

But the egregious example of one whose lustre could not shine undiminished by nearer acquaintance, was provided in Sir Robert Walpole, a man of small acquisitions and narrow capacity. To Swift's assertion that Walpole " had none but beasts and blockheads for his penmen " Savage added that the whole range of

Walpole's mind was from "obscenity to politics, and from politics to obscenity." The epigram did not reach Walpole's ear, but was immensely popular with his enemies. Savage could not afford to express political opinions. He was almost a Jacobite at heart; but even his intellect cried "Hats off!" to the dynasty to which he owed his life. If political activity was cut off from him, he could at least take pleasure in the analysis of political figures, in comparing one with another, in the nice balance of personal estimates. To a poet, the figure of philosophical Bolingbroke was bound to offer a pleasing contrast with that of Walpole the opportunist, the man who never had his equal in business.

But Lord Tyrconnel served the Ministry, and could take no hostile criticism of Walpole seriously. The passion for independence ran so high in Savage, that it never occurred to him to be influenced at this time by his position with Tyrconnel; and his patron was too liberal to cut down the poet's jokes. He rejoiced in the success of his experiment. He had restored this unfortunate man to a sense of his own dignity. The great and varied interests that made up his new life were drawing him away from the contemplation of his own sorrows. Wherever Tyrconnel went, he heard golden opinions of his secretary. There was something almost comical in the rapidity with which Savage had become famous; and the extent of his dominion in society was far greater than had ever been anticipated by his patron. To be introduced to

Mr. Savage, was a privilege ; to listen to his conversation, an unequalled delight ; to be called his friend, a title to universal consideration. When he entered the box of a theatre the attention of the audience was diverted from the players to observe with whom he came and what manner of coat he was wearing. And Savage passed through all these scenes of adulation with a gravity, an imperturbable sweetness and decorum which doubled his popularity.

When, in the early part of 1730, Lady Tyrconnel recovered from a grave illness after a cure at the Bath, he celebrated the occasion in verses of congratulation of which the melodious gaiety was much admired at that time. Unfortunately congratulation was premature, for the lady died in the September of the year. Little more than a month afterwards, Savage lost a generous friend in Mrs. Oldfield. The town was still talking of her impersonation of Sophonisba in Thomson's tragedy in which she had appeared with Mr. Wilks. Playgoers went about saddened in the knowledge that her voice, of which the persuasiveness and the power could not grow stale with familiarity, was hers still ; the voice that so recently had made memorable her utterance of the line

Not one base word of Carthage—on thy soul!

With her died Lady Betty Modish, Biddy Tipkin, Lady Townley, and that whole sisterhood of scintillating frivolities with the impersonation of which she

had regaled the town for so many years. She is said to have allowed Savage a pension of fifty pounds a year during her lifetime; and it is certain that she opened her purse to him when he was in need. Perhaps she felt that the five hundred pounds bequeathed to her by Lord Rivers could not be better employed than in relieving the need of a son who (whether by design or accident) had been excluded from sharing in the benefits of his father's will.

Of Anne Oldfield, Pope was thinking when he described Narcissa

> A very heathen in the carnal part,
> Yet still a sad good Christian at her heart.

On Tuesday, the twenty-seventh of October, 1730, the dead actress was taken from her house in Grosvenor Street to be buried in Westminster Abbey. She had on a fine Brussels lace head-dress, a holland shift with tuckers and double ruffles of the same lace and a pair of new kid gloves. There is melancholy dignity in this expression of her conviction that the coffin was no less suitable a place for wearing fine clothes than the stage. Savage put on a suit of complete mourning for her. Of those composing the concourse of people gathered at her funeral none had more genuine grounds for sorrow than the poet, in whom her statue inspired the lines:

> Imag'd at length, the bury'd heroine, known
> Still seems to wound, to smile, or frown in stone!
> As art could art, or metal stone surpass,
> Her soul strikes, gleaming through Corinthian brass!

From a photograph by Emery Walker after a painting in the National Portrait Gallery after Jonathan Richardson.

ANNE OLDFIELD.

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The theatre had been the scene of his first experiments in literature; Mrs. Oldfield's services in his behalf had been disinterested; and that no other construction should be put upon them, he refrained from any public expression, whether in prose or verse, on the subject of their friendship.

The near contemplation of death turned his thoughts in a solemn direction. Sir Richard Steele had died a year ago, happily not before a reconciliation had been effected between him and Savage. Lady Tyrconnel's unexpected death had turned the house from festivity into mourning. Old memories of Savage's boyhood stirred within him, as the coffin bearing the exquisitely clad body of Anne Oldfield was lowered into the vault. It was long since the tiny trumpets had sounded in his ear their silver fanfare of coming delivery. Now the pinnacle of fame was within sight. He was almost the great man that the crowd believed him. The spectacle of life was indeed full of miracles. To gaze upon them, was to grow old. He pondered the career of the actress whom they had just buried: from a salary of fifteen shillings a week to a grave in Westminster Abbey!

XXVIII

From his double throne as Dunce and Poet Laureate, Colley Cibber excited both the scorn and the envy of Savage. The marriage of these two sentiments was fruitful for the disappointed competitor, who conceived the happy idea of publishing some verses addressed to Her Majesty under the audacious title of Volunteer Laureate. He took care to suggest that the task of extolling his King and Queen, voluntarily imposed upon himself, should be regularly performed each year. In Queen Caroline he celebrated "a Pharaoh's daughter in the shade," to whom he owed delivery from his mother's cruel persecution. He offered to paint King George on his noblest throne—the heart of his royal lady. He confessed himself a bastard son not only of nature but also of the muse, and acknowledged his debt to the Queen for that inspiration which the muse withheld.

Cibber was indignant, and informed him that the King alone could confer the title of Laureate; he denied that Savage had any more right to style himself Volunteer Laureate than Volunteer Lord or Volunteer Baronet. But the Queen liked the poem, particularly the lines which referred to His Majesty, and she sent

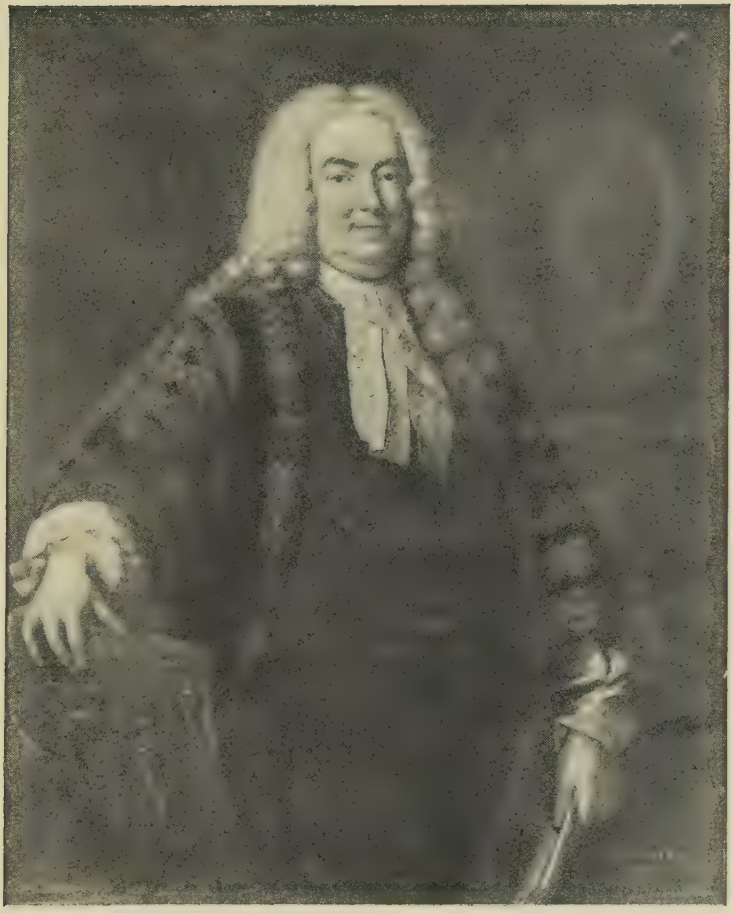
Lord North to Mr. Savage with a bank bill of fifty pounds and a message that he had permission to write annually on the same subject; his services to be rewarded with a like present yearly until something better could be done for him.

This was more than he had expected, but not more than he thought he deserved. He fancied the height of his new honour increased in the public eye by the temporary absence of the King and the regency of the Queen, which was instituted soon after the publication of his poem; and his intercourse with Sir Robert Walpole, on whom Her Majesty depended now more than ever for advice, made him even more studious than he had been before to conceal from the minister the opinion which he entertained of him in private. It was only when Lord Tyrconnel urged him to compose a panegyric on Walpole that he discovered an impatience at what seemed like an attempt to destroy his independence. The more Savage hesitated, the more obdurate Tyrconnel became in his request. Were the demands made upon his lenience to have no limit?

Until now he had refrained from anything that could be construed by his dependent in the light of undue influence; and even now he was eager to avoid an altercation which could hardly be conducted to an issue without involving a display of some heat on a larger and a more personal topic than this matter concerned. He therefore shrouded the naked force of

his request in the repeated assurance that an epistle to the statesman from Mr. Savage would be regarded in high quarters as a graceful compliment. Against flattery like this Savage was not proof. It would have been highly inconvenient, in the face of the situation, to see in his acquiescence in Lord Tyrconnel's wish the last stage of a gradual surrender to the intellectual treachery of polite society. To Walpole, Savage meant little or nothing at all; nor had Savage ever felt seriously tempted to disturb by an outburst of ferocious candour the pleasant shallows of social intercourse as they smiled at each other across their host's cheerful dinner-table. Under Lord Tyrconnel's cogent persuasion he now began to see a possibility of dissociating in his mind Walpole the man from Walpole the statesman. In that varied political activity, something could surely be found for honest praise. So it came that the poem was written, and the danger of a collision between the will of its author and that of his munificent patron avoided.

Savage smiled at the twenty guineas which Sir Robert sent him in acknowledgment; smiled and accepted them. If Walpole was no judge of literature, he was a considerable judge of men. He was right in assuming that this sum was enough for any poet to regard as valuable, who condescended to be paid at all in money for his invaluable services. And Savage was the last poet who could afford to be captious in such matters. The magnificence of his contempt



From a photograph by Emery Walker after the picture in the National Portrait Gallery by Jean Baptiste Van Loo.

ROBERT WALPOLE, FIRST EARL OF ORFORD, K.G.

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for money had risen steadily with the munificence of his patron. But his need grew with his contempt. To be without money, to however desperate straits it had frequently reduced him before his elevation, was a condition on which he could now look back as having been in poetical harmony with the struggle of genius in the bud; but it was a condition monstrously ill-suited to the ever-widening requirements of popularity. He was not covetous of wealth, nor had he the genuine lust for possession which can be nursed into avarice by fortune; what he possessed to-day he was often willing, nay eager, to abandon to-morrow. But the satisfaction of his whim in the moment that it took practicable shape, was for Savage the priceless privilege of success. And his whims multiplied like the swallows in summer. For no more than the cost of a pair of shoe-buckles he had parted with all five cantos of "The Wanderer." He could not wait to make a better bargain. He wanted ten guineas; the bookseller had ten guineas in his pocket. From that pocket it must fly into Savage's at any cost. He was in the state of mind described by Lord Chesterfield in the verses on Lady Hervey:

> Had I Hanover, Bremen, and Verden,
> And likewise the Duchy of Zell,
> I'd part with them all for a farthing
> To have my dear Molly Lepel.

Occasionally Lord Tyrconnel, partly knowing, partly suspecting, the difficulties and the disabilities to which

Savage's quixotic extravagance exposed him, would beg him to spare some time to the conduct of official business. He would have been glad to have his secretary's help in the management of a large and elaborate correspondence ; but the poet steered dexterously round every plan in the execution of which his life would be made more regular. He broke his appointments with as much regularity as other people kept them ; and his excuses, when he gave any at all, were either so ingenious as to forestall rather than to allay indignation, or so unblushing as to challenge an explosion of wrath for which, as he well knew, some of the necessary elements happened to be missing.

For the eccentricities of genius Tyrconnel had a large tolerance. He knew how illogical it was to expect ordinary conduct in men who were producing extraordinary work. He would have been content, even at the cost of much personal inconvenience and some humiliation, to allow the continuance of preposterous conditions, could he have felt certain that they were contributing to the composition of a masterpiece. But masterpieces could not spring without labour even from the brains of poets. Truly, a happy stroke of wit might come from good wine ; but then credit should be duly allowed to the vintage, and a proper distinction should be preserved between the man and the bottle. The beauty of Mr. Savage's manners was still a frequent source of encomium ; so was the studied perfection of his dress,

to the observation of which (for those whom it concerned) the dawn of each new day lent a prospect of fresh surprises in fancy ; subtle and delightful felicities of colours meeting in graceful challenge on rare materials ; the intricate, figured embroidery of India mocking at the melting richness of velvet from the looms of Lyons. To hear Savage utter elegant speeches in praise of industry, as he glanced at the glittering sleeve of his coat in a moment of acute idleness in an idle day, was a poor substitute to a man as busy as Tyrconnel for the production of a work which should disclose some of that industry which Savage was so quick to praise in others and so slow to practise himself. It was not merely for the purposes of presenting a splendid appearance, that the man had been raised into a position of ease and security.

As Lord Tyrconnel watched him, he became oppressed by a sense of fatigue, like one who has been at pains to visit a theatre in the expectation to see pourtrayed some stirring exhibition of heroical conduct, only to find all scenery and no play. In the pressure of daily business, from which Savage offered him no relief by co-operation, he had neglected his estate in Lincolnshire, and, in order to avoid complications, he saw the advisability of exercising some economies in his London establishment. Still, he hesitated to sacrifice Savage to the demands of what was so obviously his own convenience. It was while nursing the hope of discovering some other way out of his

difficulty, that he was walking one day in the booksellers' quarter of the town, when his eye was attracted to a stall by the sight of some volumes in familiar covers exposed for sale. At the same moment a suspicion flashed across his mind which he now made all haste to dismiss or to justify. Having approached the bookstall very rapidly, he took up one of the volumes and examined it, to discover that it was stamped with his own arms. Impatiently replacing it, he took up another volume, only to repeat the previous experience. Suddenly, as his eye travelled furiously over the bookstall, he realised that it contained the whole of a valuable collection of books which he had given to Savage.

Mortification and anger overcame him in hot waves as he returned to his house. He scarcely knew whether to be more indignant at the black ingratitude or at the tasteless brutality of the man who could pawn so precious a gift from one who had loaded him with such benefits. If Savage needed money, he had only to prefer a request for it. He had given him no shadow of a pretext for supposing that such a request would meet with a refusal. Refusal? Had he not obeyed the dictates of generosity and delicacy to the verge of folly? And for what? For whom? Only to be rewarded with indifference that rose in this last illustration to contumely. For a man whom he had lifted from a gutter of misery and shame to the companionship of men as eminent as they were polite.

On reaching his room he gave instructions that if Mr. Savage asked for him, he should be told that his lordship was deeply engaged ; for he feared the consequences of being confronted with him before he had made up his mind how to show his resentment in such a way as to make its meaning mercilessly clear. The longer he reflected, the deeper grew his sense of outrage, and the vaguer his plans for punishing it. From the simple act of a summary dismissal he shrank. He knew that his aunt was calmly and patiently expecting his discomfiture ; she would luxuriate in the thought that her headstrong nephew had at last been brought to a proper contempt for the creature whom he had so rashly and so resolutely befriended. Lord Tyrconnel's wrath against Savage came in fitful gusts of great violence, but it did not blow continuously enough to break down his steady reluctance to give Anne Brett the satisfaction of triumphing over him. Some other way must be devised for escaping from the exasperating predicament in which he found himself, after the indulgence of a chivalrous impulse of which the consequences had extended over several years. The change in his feelings towards Savage had been slow to assert itself, and even now he did not regret what he had done on his behalf. But he was grievously wounded by a discovery which disenchanted him with human nature, and he was sorely perplexed as to how next to act.

XXIX

As a becoming frame in which to set off his own glittering personality, Savage found the polite world who made up Tyrconnel's acquaintance perfectly satisfactory. But he was intellectually impatient of that unruffled composure which wealth and birth conferred too frequently upon men of mean parts. Aristocracy was a noble product of society; but its recognised representatives assumed too readily that it was the only product; in the legitimate pleasure with which they beheld their own merits and their own superior advantages, they forgot, or deliberately ignored, the larger world; their vision of men and of their activities was exclusive rather than comprehensive. When Savage was a boy, his imagination escaped the bounds of poverty and sordid surroundings to dwell in a region remote (as he then thought) from narrowness. Now that he was a man, within the enchanted circle of wealth's liberties, his appetite sickened at the delicate fare with which he was perpetually regaled. After a day of smooth speeches and elaborate courtesies, he felt a longing for rougher companionship in a grosser atmosphere; and the tavern attracted him as some fantastic-looking island by its dim promise of

strange peoples attracts the sea-farer sweeping a tired gaze over the boundless monotony of the waters. For the tavern was the house of call always open to men of all ages in all ranks ; and the noblest mirrors in the mansions of rich and eminent men did not reflect life in such red variety as the wine from Oporto in miscellaneous company.

As he loved the tavern, so Savage had the art of securing a welcome in any tavern into which he ventured. He had the right word for the drawer and the smile which captivated the company. He could entice others as easily into conversation as he gathered them round him. And it was his favourite practice to make many men of different occupations and ranks join the circle of which he was the centre. From the superior elevation to which his knowledge of human nature and his singular adaptability to the requirements of places raised him, he handed the torch of hilarity from one to another, like a monarch directing a spectacle with a shrewd regard to the vanity of each person taking part in it. Nor did he abdicate from his throne until the time came for paying the reckoning, and then with the deliberate grandeur of one who was by no means shirking an awkward predicament. On the contrary, he contrived so to impress the company with the benefits conferred upon it by his able direction, that they would have been quick to resent it as ostentation in him had he volunteered to defray the expenses of the evening.

Such a happy understanding could not be established, of course, in a single visit to any one tavern. It took a little time before the singularly autocratic government of Mr. Savage was recognised in a society imperfectly acquainted with the supreme delights of submitting to his laws. At first it seemed inconsequent that the man who called for the wine with so reckless a disregard for its cost should very rarely pay for it. But the fashionable drinkers soon took a very different view of the matter. Was not this the great Mr. Savage, the man whom the world delighted to honour? Who would not willingly spend more than the cost of a good bottle of port-wine to enjoy such company? Was it surprising that, for a man so prodigal by nature, the sun hardly ever set upon a full pocket? This was all the more easily recognised to be the true view of the case because, on the few occasions when Savage had a guinea, its expenditure was always so meteoric as to excite universal admiration.

Still, the initial stages of acquaintance with a new tavern were not always free from embarrassment. There were the staid, unimaginative drinkers, sometimes in a majority on an evening when the luck was against Mr. Savage; men who would have been ready to take a mean revenge upon him by surreptitiously removing themselves one by one from the company, and leaving him in pawn to be dealt with by the host. Against the prejudices of these persons it was

necessary to have some protection ; and Savage adopted the bold and successful expedient of repaying this reluctant hospitality by an invitation to his private apartment in Lord Tryconnel's house, to which they repaired from the tavern. Having shown the astonished guests into the room, he summoned the butler and carelessly ordered him to place before them the best wine in his master's cellar. Lord Tyrconnel's best was very good ; and as my lord himself could not have done the honours of his wine with better grace or warmer welcome than Mr. Savage, it may be supposed that the guests went away satisfied.

What had originated in a desperate resource soon turned into a convenient habit ; nor did Savage confine his borrowed hospitality to the men who were apt to misinterpret his lack of money and presume upon it. Such invidious distinctions were repugnant to his nature. The frequency with which the butler was summoned increased ; the hours at which his services were engaged became later and later. The company assembled in Mr. Savage's room were sometimes in an advanced stage of intoxication when they began the final orgy which was to usher in another day. And Mr. Savage appeared to take particular pleasure in picking up queer people, whose eccentricities emerged, to the destruction of all possible belief in a superior origin, under the influence of wine. It was no novelty to Tyrconnel's butler to see gentlemen in liquor. From a butler's point of view, it was the liquor that brought

out the gentleman. But these friends of Mr. Savage! If this was what came of poetry, then he could only thank his stars that he had not a poet for a master. As it was, he disliked waiting on Mr. Savage; but something terrific in the man's way of issuing an order made him fearful of the consequences if he were to be slow in obeying.

For Savage, the discovery of submerged virtues in persons stigmatised by society was an unfailing source of recreation. The more he saw of the world, the more zealous he became in his campaign against accepted values. He regarded success as largely an accident, the reputation for virtue as frequently the result of misunderstanding or superficial estimates. With the ever-widening compassion of a mild priest he viewed the weaknesses assailing the lives of noble characters; and again there were moments in which the merciless vision of the artist wrapped all the movements of his soul in a cloud impenetrable to himself, and he hailed every inequality, every inconsequence in the characters and in the fortunes of men as a priceless contribution to the busy masque unfolding itself day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute, for the sinister delight of the untiring spectator.

It would be difficult to imagine a livelier and a less presentable crew of companions than those who assembled one night in the year 1734 in Savage's apartment at Lord Tyrconnel's. Not that any one of them had been chosen at random, for each man's claim had

been carefully examined before he was admitted to be of the party. Mere reverence for Mr. Savage by no means afforded a sufficient title ; neither did mere merit without such reverence. A pawnbroker with a sense of humour, a juggler who could make a ballad of glass balls in the air, an attorney with a taste for literature, a parson who was not afraid of staining his cloth with a bottle, a corporal who could tell a merry tale of rapine and debauchery by the King's men in a foreign city, a travelling tutor with a pretty talent for describing good inns and tall steeples—such were a few of the types represented in Savage's chosen circle ; men fascinated into one another's company by a common attraction for the presiding genius and the quality of the entertainment to which he gave them access.

On this occasion the spirits of the company were at their highest, and Savage distinguished himself by the exhibition of a merriment more than usually boisterous. The hour was very late, and the silence in Lord Tyrconnel's house as they had made their way to Savage's apartment had increased their sense of security from interruption. Conversation soon became too tame a vehicle for the expression of their good humour. Toasts became too formal and too lucid for brains co-operating towards confusion. Soon even the noisy reiteration of a popular drinking chorus became too sober a pursuit for their drunken throats. Glasses were broken, chairs were pushed

aside, and the floor rang with the heels of the dancers, who cursed as they lurched, and groaned as they fell one on top of the other. Savage alone sat watching their licentious frolics with an amused stare upon his face. The wine had flown into the legs of the others and then turned to lead, dragging them to the ground. It stayed in Savage's head to give to that scene of disorder a malicious coherence, a suggestion of his own power in commanding a spectacle of overwhelming Satanic folly. To think of the household peacefully slumbering while this orgy was at its climax, was to double the consciousness of its symbolical meaning : Order and Chaos under the same roof, within the same four walls, between the night and the morning ! Splendid juxtaposition of opposites : Order and Chaos !

He thought he descried a familiar figure, strangely out of place, in the open doorway. The pale face and irate eyes disconcerted him, and he waved his hand impatiently, as if to motion it away. Lord Tyrconnel advanced hastily into the room. His drawn sword rose in a sudden gesture of impatience, but fell again as Savage smiled feebly at him and pointed a finger of ridicule at the drunken entanglement of figures at his feet.

XXX

If Lord Tyrconnel expected anything in the shape of apology from the man who had abused his generosity and outraged the peace of his household, he had miscalculated the height to which pride could rise in an eccentric poet placed in a humiliating light by the glaring extravagance of his own folly. Savage was indignant that his lordship should offer any criticism of his conduct, and at once discovered in that criticism a pretext for a violent outburst against his patron. It was some time since he had begun to feel that neither Tryconnel's views nor his company were acceptable to him. His cousin presumed upon the fortuitous accidents of wealth and birth (so he argued), to demand a subservience to which the distinction of his mind by no means entitled him. Obligation to any living creature, except to a mother, was a sentiment unintelligible to Savage. The justice of Tyrconnel's rebellion at the evil use to which his consideration and bounty were put, added offence to the manner of its expression. He dared to dismiss Savage from his service. Without doubt there was every reason that the two men should separate ; but to the radical nature of the tie which had bound them

together Savage refused all recognition. Was the author of *The Wanderer* a liveried servant, that Tyrconnel should speak of "service" and "dismissal"? Truly he had pawned the books which Tyrconnel had given him; but where was the delicacy, where the friendship of the man who could be so coarse as not to realise that the thing had been done under the pressure of necessity and in the intention of redeeming the pledge at the first opportunity?

That Tyrconnel should rebuke him openly on a matter so private was an unpardonable offence. As well might Savage have commented to his lordship on the swiftness with which the second Lady Tyrconnel had succeeded to the first. He had been drunk, of course; but what of that? Had he not seen Walpole drunker—the Right Honourable Sir Robert Walpole whom he had belauded in an epistle, out of weakness for the man who had asked of him this favour? His exasperation at the affront put upon him in Tyrconnel's curt message of dismissal exploded in a letter threatening his former patron with public exposure, and superscribed: "Right Honourable Brute and Booby." Defiance and contempt, as he took pains to admit, were now his prevailing sentiments towards the man whom he had extolled as a shining mirror of goodness in the dedication of *The Wanderer*.

So far from seeing any ground for self-censure in the inconsistency of such conduct, Savage regarded himself as one who had been cruelly undeceived in

the entertainment of a deep but misguided admiration. Utterly blind to the merciless caricature of himself into the delineation of which his passion was betraying him, he expunged from his own copy of *The Wanderer* the encomium on Tyrconnel. As if his opinion of his patron could have any significance except for himself; as if, by blotting out the lines in a single copy of the book, he could destroy the conflicting impression conveyed in all the other copies in circulation!

In explaining the quarrel which now raged between him and Tyrconnel he ascribed his dismissal to motives of economy, and accused Tyrconnel of seeking an occasion for a rupture that was convenient to the restriction of his expenditure. A few years before, Pope had already detected in Savage a tendency to act upon a fictitious imagination. It was through Savage, that Aaron Hill had been misled into counting upon Pope's support in the publication of a play. Savage had confused his own genuine eagerness to do Hill a service with an insidious passion for exaggerating his own weight with the master. And Savage admired Pope and himself too much to estimate the proportions of esteem and self-interest which governed Pope in admitting him so freely to his company. In the quarrel with Tyrconnel, which was conducted with the utmost virulence, Savage challenged into expression that estimate of his rank in letters which was bound to tell against him. The little writers hated him; the great ones were his allies, but not his champions. Pope

admired *The Wanderer*, but he would have resented the supposition that he might have been the author of it. The furthest to which he could go, would have been to polish a few of the best lines in it and then admit in their case a possible paternity.

Savage never measured the force at his command with that of the circumstances opposed to him. His accusations against Tyrconnel were all the more violent for his utter inability to make them efficacious. He asserted that he had been wrongfully defrauded of a stipend and insulted by the imputation that it represented a favour and not a debt. Words soon grew inadequate for the conduct of so acrimonious a struggle, and Lord Tyrconnel, writhing under the malice of his enemy, who stopped at nothing to make him appear ridiculous as well as unscrupulous, rushed with a number of attendants to a coffee-house in the hope of finding Savage and inflicting upon him a public beating. Savage had been gone a few minutes when the party arrived, and my lord went away, cursing his ill luck and boasting of the big things it stayed him from accomplishing. On hearing what had been intended Savage went the next day to Lord Tyrconnel's house, and was with the utmost difficulty prevailed upon by the servants to retire without seeing his lordship. Time only developed more inequalities in the positions of the two disputants. Tyrconnel had servants to keep Savage from his person ; Savage had none to exclude the bailiffs from

After a mezzotint by J. Faber.

JOHN BROWNLOW, VISCOUNT TYRCONNEL.

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the mean lodging into which they entered, at Tyrconnel's instance, to seize the few objects he possessed in satisfaction of a trifling debt.

But Savage's wit won for him many an adherent; and when the public were beginning to tire of the dispute, their amazing Mr. Savage appeared in a character new enough once more to excite attention. From the elevated retirement which he pictured in his poem on the Queen's birthday in the March of 1734; from those groves of Richmond, far removed from the toys and the tinsel with which men in Tyrconnel's circle trifled away their lives, he emerged once more to answer a charge which he may well have owed to his quarrel with his patron.

The writer of *The Daily Courant*, a paper under the control of the Ministry, trading upon those loose expressions of admiration for Bolingbroke which from time to time he had let fall in coffee-houses, accused him of influencing elections against the Court by heading a Tory mob. In the calumniator's zeal to give credibility to his account, he had mentioned particulars which it was easy for Savage to refute. The poet's published answer completely exonerated him, and he now directed all his controversial activity to compelling an apology from the journal which had printed the charge. In this attempt he failed, but although he was eager to prosecute the writer of the libel in the King's Bench, he abandoned his intention when he had good reason to know that his own reputation had been unimpaired

by the accusation. The Queen, whom his enemies had so maliciously tried to prejudice against him by this device, was still steadfast to her Volunteer Laureate : his pension was safe.

His pension was safe ; but fifty pounds a year was a small sum to one accustomed to the style of Tyrconnel's mansion ; and, since he was worth persecuting, he had some excuse for thinking himself of importance. To take a fierce part in a public dispute was an excellent way to enlarge the extent of his reputation. Eighteen years had passed since, as a mere boy, he had precipitated his pen into the ink of the Bangorian controversy, but his effort to attract attention to himself had then failed ; he had upset a mere puddle of ink into an ocean of ecclesiastical and political argument ; and one of his first experiences in literature had been chagrin at being unable to detect any consequence (either to himself or to any one else) of his indiscretion. Not only had Savage improved in the art of vituperation since those days, but also the present opportunity gave wider scope for the exercise of his talents. Then the controversy had eddied further and further away from Benjamin Hoadly, its centre, into the backwaters of doctrine ; now it was gathering all its force about Dr. Rundle, who had been registered in the public prints as successor to the see of Gloucester at the nomination of the Lord Chancellor. The Bishop of London had interposed, and a vigorous attempt was being made to represent Rundle as a Deist.

Both Pope and Swift were on the side of Rundle: indeed Swift declared his only fault to be that he took no wine. Their support, in itself, was sufficient recommendation to Savage for an attack on the Bishop of London; but he had the additional incentive of sharing with Rundle the friendship of Thomson and of the Reverend James Foster, to whom he had addressed verses. Foster was for Savage the ideal priest, who marked the mean between the infidel and the bigot, a good man whose simple point of view the poet had happily summed up in the line:

> Where mystery begins, religion ends.

Rundle was sympathetic enough to such an attitude to be unacceptable to the champions of ecclesiastical power; nor was it likely that the man who spoke of himself with amiable complacency as "the most inactive man living" would make a very sound divine. Savage, sailing blithely on the crest of the popular wave beating against High Church claims, not only championed Dr. Rundle in all the coffee-houses where he could obtain a hearing, but also made a spirited attack on ecclesiastical abuse in *The Progress of a Divine*, a poem which was responsible for bringing upon the author a charge of obscenity which he was obliged to answer in the Court of King's Bench.

So skilful was the manipulation of the subject, that the poem itself forestalled the misinterpretation to which it would be subjected. The violence of the

attack was not greater than the nicety with which it was aimed. Savage took care to imply that the story of his priest passing through every form of profligacy to preferment reflected an individual rather than a class. Secure in the knowledge that the clergy would be only too ready to injure themselves by extending the significance of his application, he began the poem by a reminder that

> Priests are like other folks—some good, some bad.

But the bitter and unblushing satire of the wretch whose career gave to the poem its story, blinded the majority of readers to the careful reservations insisted on by the author in the course of his narrative. In the fascination by which men suffered themselves to be beguiled as they read the long catalogue of crimes and vicious acts, they forgot to inquire with what main purpose they had been so deftly accumulated, so vividly pourtrayed.

Those who present complicated issues to a crowd always attract, even if they do not court, misconstruction. Savage did not shrink from the indignation raised by his satire. When he was asked on what grounds he dared insinuate that this profligate priest, always ready "to do the will of all—save that of God," should find at last a patron in the Bishop of London, he replied, readily enough, that it was legitimate to suppose that he who obstructed the rise of a good man without reason would, for bad

reasons, promote the exaltation of a villain. From the dangers of being identified with freethinkers who affected to see a valuable substitute in the poet for the priest, Savage guarded himself by writing :

> Then wise freethinkers cry not smartly thus—
> "Is the Priest work'd?—the Poet's one for us."
> Freethinkers bigots are alike to me;
> For these misdeem half-thinking, thinking free.

Few men on trial for the offence of obscenity in literature have succeeded in establishing their innocence so triumphantly as Savage. He did not deny that he had introduced obscene ideas into his poem; he maintained that he introduced them in order to expose them to detestation. He had entered the court under the shadow of an accusation often easy to make, always difficult to repudiate. He came out not only in the bright daylight of an acquittal, but also distinguished by the emphatic speech in which Sir Philip Yorke had dismissed the information against him with a panegyric on the purity and excellence of his writings.

Savage took his victory magnanimously. He had no wish to persecute the Bishop of London, and he issued no more copies of his poem when the edition was sold. Dr. Rundle had benefited by the controversy, for it ended in the appointment of one of his friends to the see of Gloucester, and his own promotion to the more lucrative see of Derry.

Long after the case came to an end the memory

of Yorke's discernment and the sweetness of his address lingered with Savage, offering a grateful contrast to the ineffaceable memory of that other judge, who yet lived to increase his reputation for undiscerning cruelty. It was maliciously told of Sir Francis Page that when some one inquired after his health in these declining years, he replied, "I keep hanging on, hanging on." No wonder that the name of Yorke slipped easily from Savage's pen when he was seeking for the mild and learned character with which to contrast his fierce delineation of Page, the man of impure heart and empty head.

Of all the parts in which Savage courted celebrity, none is perhaps stranger than this of moral censor. *The Progress of a Divine* was a brilliant escapade in controversy. It was watched by many of his friends with misgivings, and by all his enemies with satisfaction as a source of certain and speedy ruin. Tyrconnel watched the trial in the full hope that in its issue the pride and the ingratitude of the man who had insulted him would at last meet with that rebuke which no individual seemed powerful enough to make effective. The political charge against Savage had failed ; but, from the admitted authorship of obscene lines that blackened the writer, what devices could avail to remove discredit ? The Queen herself would be the first to express her indignation by withdrawing her pension.

The Queen did nothing of the kind ; people who

had never read Mr. Savage's poetry before were incited to an interest in it by the praise of Sir Philip Yorke. Mr. Savage was still the eminent Mr. Savage, with yet another decoration on the gay coat of his celebrity. What indeed could with any certainty be prophesied of one whom no danger disheartened, whom no success lifted entirely outside the reign of self-congratulation ?

XXXI

Savage was not satisfied to be mistaken for an infidel, even by the more careless readers of *The Progress of a Divine*. There was a wide difference between disliking the Bishop of London's religion and condemning religion altogether. But for the solace of religion, his own life would be intolerable. He had looked upon death in the falling body of Sinclair; death had assumed for him almost the reality of a personal presence as he lay under sentence in his cell. So now it seemed to him, whenever something stirred in him the contrition that continued to draw sustenance from a sorrow that had never died. No man was prouder in company than Savage, no man meeker when he sat alone with the memory of that happening in the tavern, and of the days when all the coherence of life had been exploded in the anticipation of his own execution. To be an infidel, despite such an experience, was an impossibility for the man who wrote *The Wanderer*. He was eager to follow pure reason as his guide in the company of the acutest thinkers of his age; but he was quick to take offence at what he recognised as an impudent familiarity, when pure reason led him by the nose into the arid

neighbourhood of free thought. To rid himself of the stigma of being supposed even by the foolish to entertain such opinions, he planned another poem, to be called *The Progress of a Freethinker*. It was to depict the career of a man wooed and won by the sophistical arguments against Christianity, passing through every stage of vice and folly, through scenes such as the author's own escapades would enable him to present with minute fidelity, until, a martyr to the laws of his own logic, he precipitates himself by suicide into another world.

But this idea never took shape. Once more want forced his mind away from the elucidation of theories. The hope of promotion held out to him in the message accepting his services as a poet was unfulfilled. At the urgent request of his friends, Sir Robert Walpole promised him the next post that should fall vacant, at an income of not more than two hundred pounds a year. The assurance was made all the richer for the terms in which it was conveyed, Sir Robert declaring that this "was not the promise of a minister to a petitioner, but of a friend to a friend."

The formula for dismissing applications from needy persons does not vary from one age to another. Official urbanity long ago invented the message that such persons shall be "remembered." Dr. Young satirised this formula in the line, "I've been so long remembered, I'm forgot." Savage knew the

danger, and took what precaution he could against it. In his poem on the Queen's birthday in 1735, he alluded freely to his ill health, to the conflict between his elegant desires and the poverty which excluded him from satisfying them. But the lines produced no effect. Walpole too was silent.

Comforting himself with the maxim that it is only the poor who can afford to be extravagant, Savage no sooner obtained the bill of fifty pounds from Her Majesty than he changed it in order to recover by a brief period of unbridled indulgence some of the spirits which had languished in the previous period of distress. If his life was destined to swing between the extremes of starvation and superabundance, he took a malicious pleasure in accelerating the pace of the pendulum and increasing the distance it traversed by giving it a reckless push with his own hand. The stars that twinkled at a famished poet through his garret window assumed a divine radiance for eyes which the night before had grown dim with the light of many candles and too much wine. But inasmuch as men with settled incomes of any kind whatsoever make poor counsellors to those who are constantly being confronted with an economical problem absurdly simple and yet insoluble even by the shrewdest financial genius, Savage took care to make himself inaccessible to his friends so long as his fifty pounds lasted. Liberty of movement was too precious a privilege to endanger by admitting the encroachments

to which friendship lent excuse. What friend could resist the temptation of reading a homily on thrift to the destitute poet who spent in a few weeks enough to keep him alive for half the year? And the slightest allusion to the future was enough to spoil the fancies of the present to which Savage devoted himself to the exclusion of every disconcerting reflection, until he was once more compelled into the neighbourhood of those from whom he could borrow half a crown or a supper.

The liberty of which he was so jealous in his private life was now boldly reflected in *The Poet's Dependance on a Statesman*, in which he lifted himself upon a pedestal of honesty from which to gaze in undisturbed scorn upon the venality of place-seekers too busy to forward any other's interest but their own, while the statesmen upon whom they fawned were too practical to advance pure merit unless it could be suborned to their own political causes. Out of the isolation into which he had thrust himself he built the lofty disdain of one who hated profoundly all secret service, and was content to languish in neglect if he could die with a stainless record, remembered as the disciple, the unswerving friend, of Alexander Pope. Again he retired to Richmond, at once to nurse this exalted condition of mind and to escape the importunities of creditors. The grandeur of civilisation in all the finished products of the town was never borne in upon him while he walked its streets

and idled with its inmates. They seemed only to feed his passion for satire, to challenge him to the nice measurement of conflicting evils and ignoble interests. But while he would stand transfixed in the hum of the city to listen with the ear of imagination to the hum of innumerable bees in some lonely, far-off forest, he had only to be bodily present in that place of fancied fairness, for his thoughts to turn to the superb contemplation of the busy scene he had left behind him. The London which, when he was in it, was all smoke and corruption, became from the solitude of Richmond Hill a shining mirror in which he saw reflected the noblest works of mankind: stately streets, wide, wind-swept squares, the tapering loveliness of city spires, the leisurely succession of spacious mansions, smiling palaces, theatres, hospitals, threaded by the barge-laden, silver Thames.

He began to write of these things, and, as he wrote, the design of his poem became enlarged with the effort to paint man's industry in its most daring achievements. He turned from a satiety of wonder at the uncontrolled passion of water plunging from rocky heights into cavernous hollows of nature, to a studious reverence for the mastery which broke up its stupendous volume, and bore it, by ductile rivulets, into distant towns. He saw poetic force in the work of the engineer and of the builder, fashioning the earth's material, carving it with a mighty ingenuity to further the purposes and widen the activities of men.

How small a thing was the power of language in a master of literature in comparison with the control of the very elements! To cut a canal through some solid isthmus seemed to him even a more marvellous achievement than to write the *Essay on Man*. Like some Ulysses who has slept through the centuries, he fancied himself awakening to take another voyage in this same world—a world magically transformed, bathed in a new light reflecting all the colours of a complex civilisation: vast stretches of waste land reclaimed; the clamorous sea kept back by dikes; ports deepened to admit the ingress of new vessels whose keels reached down, like the roots of trees, down through the water; the far-beaming eyes of lighthouses high-perched upon their rocky crests, ever vigilant in their warning to the pilot not to be beckoned within the treacherous waters of their seeming hospitality. And there was the loveliness of earth gardened into fairness, as well as the engrossing marvel of seas and rivers made navigable. He thought of bare plains nursed into the luxury of forests; of a wilderness of leaves, trackless, bewildering, made civil by trim paths and gracious vistas; of terraced slopes, smiling, rhythmical, punctuated now with urns, now with obelisks, and again with fanes and statues.

From this prolonged rapture, born of the sublime music to which, in his poetic vision, art and nature in a frequent and subtle alternation of parts lent, the one the melody, and the other the harmonies, he now

turned to the unexplored regions of the world, and saw in their discovery no violation, but a solemn, patriotic duty. He thought of Oglethorpe and of how, in the colonisation of Georgia, he was turning, nay had already turned, the dream of Aaron Hill into a substantial reality. For he had founded a town up the Savannah River, and made a treaty with Tomo-chi-chi, the chief of the Indians. And it was the peaceful method of Oglethorpe that fired the poet's enthusiasm. Only a couple of years before, the traveller he had come to London with several of his Indians, no captives exhibited for the vulgar amusement of a crowd, but friends and fellow workers. To develop the resources of primitive regions in a spirit of benevolent and peaceful enterprise seemed to Savage a noble ideal, in which he saw prosperity for the poverty-stricken class with which even in those days his country was overstocked. Nature must not lie fallow while men starved. The lines came tumultuously, with the clash of philanthropic zeal and imperialist exultation. They might be quoted to-day to excuse the conquest of South Africa :

> Shall rocks forbid the latent gem to shine?
> Shall mines, obedient, aid no artist's care,
> Nor give the martial sword and peaceful share?
> Ah! shall they never precious ore unfold,
> To smile in silver, or to flame in gold?

But to apply the quotation apart from Savage's burning denunciation of blood-spilling in the name of civilisation, would be to distort its meaning; and it

would be a fairer tribute to the poet's inspiration, to place the following couplet among the large red apples which adorn the windows of the London Office for Canadian Emigration in Parliament Street :

> Shall fruits which none but brutal eyes survey,
> Untouch'd grow ripe, untasted drop away?

With some lines of passionate censure on the African slave-trade, Savage's muse became silent. He called his poem *On Public Spirit in regard to Public Works*, and he concluded it with some feeble verses to the high personage to whom it was addressed. His Royal Highness Frederick, Prince of Wales, had only been married a month when the poem was ready for publication. There seemed little prospect for Savage of enlisting to any further practical purpose the sympathies of the royal father who hated his son so much that he wished him dead, nor that of the royal mother who shared her husband's sentiment towards their eldest child. Savage did not know the Prince of Wales, nor could he find any one to obtain for him an introduction. But Frederick's tastes were said to be literary, and Savage hoped that this Epistle once published might in itself serve the author as a passport to the Prince's patronage.

From the man who could write this poem a statesman could derive assistance ; a moralist, high satisfaction ; the heir to a throne, legitimate pleasure that his name should be invoked to protect so noble

an effort. Did Frederick, Prince of Wales, answer the poet's expectation of reward? Not at all. He ignored the compliment. Perhaps he never understood it. Savage waited in vain for the signal which never came. He advertised the poem. The Prince's attention was not roused. He sent to his printer for a copy, that he might present it in person to this singular patron. But injured pride rather than want of courage stayed him at the last moment from carrying out his intention.

And yet Prince Frederick was literary—was he not? Yes; himself a satirist. The sovereigns of Europe were still laughing at the lampoon of his royal papa and mamma in his elegant *Histoire du Prince Titi.* It had been written a year before in the French language and was now being translated into the author's native tongue. *Public spirit?* No—that was encroaching on his father's province. *Public works?* No, he preferred dancing.

XXXII

Death and continued misfortune thinned the number of Savage's friends. Wilks had died two years after Anne Oldfield. The quarrel with Tyrconnel had alienated many men whose influence might even now be regained if Savage would show some sign of repentance. But his resentment was implacable. He demanded, in letters displaying an invincible arrogance, the restoration of his stipend, as if he had been robbed of what originally had been conferred upon him by an act of bounty. Tyrconnel left the letter unanswered. Prudence never formed a part of this poet's conduct if he knew it.

Yet prudence, with the passing of the years, had stolen unawares and all too late into some of his actions. In his original poem *On Public Spirit* he had included some lines ridiculing the English custom of allowing servants to take money from visitors whom they have conducted through celebrated villas and gardens. But he had omitted the passage before the poem had been published, for fear that the Queen might see in it a criticism of the custom exploited by Stephen Duck, her librarian, when he explained the fanciful conceits of

Merlin's Cave, the famous grotto at Richmond. Prudence also had influenced his choice of a patron—misguided prudence. He had not stopped to ask himself if these little devices were not, after all, unworthy of the man who scorned to beg the smallest favour from a statesman, who prided himself upon the untiring vigilance with which he kept his poverty inviolate.

It has been noted that the poem *On Public Spirit* bears evidence of a change wrought in the opinions of the author. In the ardour of youth, ten years earlier, he had written of his ambition to tower like the cedar, or be trampled like the shrub ; in the later poem this high alternative has turned into respect for the middle state of life that is rich without gold and great without titles. But it would have needed only a sudden elevation of fortune for Savage to return to the earlier position. Settled opinions can have no place in the life of an adventurer ; and aspiration or impression, the pale substitute which does duty for settled opinion in such lives, is only too likely to meet with misrepresentation by the critic when that adventurer happens to be a poet. For before the poet, vision hangs like some divine mist even when first he opens eyes to the world. No experience can ever scatter that tiny cloud. Life may and does from time to time pierce a tiny hole in it ; and the poet winces, utters an alien sentiment, often with a cry of pain or else of merriment, according to his mood ; but the

rent mysteriously closes up. What the critic has an irresistible temptation to call inconsistency, only begins for the poet when he tries to be like other people and to make his life conform to his utterances. And all poets try, because they too are human.

Savage saw merits in different ranks of life only as circumstance compelled him more nearly into their different neighbourhoods. Birth and fortune, for him, had been replaced by bastardy and misfortune. He was an excrescence of society, the born wanderer, taking refuge now with one, now with another ; natural enemy of the Philistine in all ranks, at home everywhere, but with nowhere a home for long. Dignity at his best, pride at his worst, distinguished him from his fellow men. No beggar could bear himself more bravely than youthful Savage picking soiled bits of paper from the road on which to write a tragedy. No Crœsus could tempt the gods with a more reckless insolence than Savage, in his golden age, as he moved at once delicately and defiantly through the glittering company of Lord Tyrconnel's circle. This familiar intercourse with affluent nobility must in any case have weakened his respect for it. Now that he was thrust from his pedestal, he was the first to belittle the gilded enchantment amid which it had been placed. And in the suddenness of his catastrophe, not knowing yet how far he was to fall, he instinctively grasped at a resting-place midway, blessing it, with no more intention of remaining on it than the wayfarer has of

remaining on the ledge of rock to which he has clung for safety after tumbling over a precipice.

The year following upon the publication of the poem addressed to the Prince of Wales was spent in rambling from one circle of chance acquaintances into another. Savage's curiosity in life was inexhaustible, and, as he never knew a man for long without borrowing money from him, he was considerate enough for the feelings of those whom he was unable to repay, not to improve acquaintance. Calamity left the charm of his presence unimpaired ; and he came to regard himself as the legitimate parasite of the ever-changing company which he delighted with his stories of great men and his sparkling conversation on the topics of the day. He could discourse with as much ease and as much emphasis on the proper conduct of a cane for a gentleman as on the latest blunder of the Ministry. Men of his own age listened with something more than patience to his humorous and large observations ; but it was chiefly of young men that he secured a boundless admiration. He spoke with the conscious authority of an accepted genius, embarrassed, it is true, in the matter of clothing and a lack of money to get a meal ; but sure of the unquestioning delicacy and support of those whom he chose to take into his confidence. He was still Volunteer Laureate, and had kissed the hand of Majesty, as he took pleasure in telling ; and few of his young admirers, very few, hesitated for a moment to accept his own view of

his situation as temporarily inconvenient, full of humiliations for the body but beneath the contempt of a lofty soul.

Occasionally some misguided rich man would make a gallant but unceremonious attempt to be charitable to the poor, brilliant creature, who had entertained a whole company with his wit and so clearly lacked the elements of comfort. But no man was unceremonious a second time with Mr. Savage. As his distress deepened, his love of punctilio always rose ; and he took no notice whatever of a message desiring him to wait upon a friend at nine o'clock in the morning. Nine o'clock ! The hour, above all the assumption, that he would be free to pay a visit at any hour without the preliminary of an appointment, filled him with indignation. He came to look upon hunger and cold like one who is jealous of a prerogative. Was it not his own choice ? He knew that many men could live easily on fifty pounds a year, the amount of his pension. A man whose genius lay in thrift could live for less. You need not pay more than eighteenpence a week for a room in a garret ; by spending threepence in a coffee-house you might fill some hours every day in good company ; a breakfast of bread and milk cost a penny, and there were many places, like The Pine-apple in New Street, where for eightpence you could dine off meat and bread and give the waiter a penny. But at the prospect of a long succession of days on this mean pattern, the

spirits of Mr. Savage would have languished and ultimately expired altogether. He chose rather to brave the storm of his adversity, to let it lash his face, than to hide himself from its fury in a miserable hut of genteel economies.

It was very cold to lie all through a winter's night upon the projecting ledge of a shop front ; but this cold was more bearable than the hot sense of shame which sometimes overcame the poet at the liberties from thieves and beggars to which his misery exposed him. For the world of beggars has its aristocracy ; and Savage was a prince among them. And if it made the limbs ache to lie without a bed, and the muscles of the face grew rigid towards the dawn, there was always the hope of new adventure on the next day ; more chance of stumbling across a stranger willing to part with the price of a bottle of Oporto than meeting with a favour from any minister once a friend. And when, as it often happened, his hope was fulfilled, and the wine burned warm in the frozen body, he looked back on his sufferings as on a splendid martyrdom. He knew London from end to end, and wherever his aimless day took him, he knew the characteristics, the chief resorts, the eminent persons of the locality. Savage never deliberately deceived any one ; but among those who experienced the charm of his company for the first time there were many who were very eager to deceive themselves about him, people whose vanity led them into the mistake of supposing

that they had by themselves discovered a man whose remarkable gifts were only surpassed as a source of wonder by the calamities of his condition. While he always took the lead in a tavern conversation, he had the art of implying deference to the others ; and so it often happened that, as his graces won more and more upon some individual listener, the man's heart would expand and an invitation to Savage to come and stay with him would slip from his tongue.

Savage not only entered the stranger's house with graceful alacrity, but also kept the family awake until the early hours of the morning, with that display of his talents to which the invitation had lent a pretext. Moreover, he ignored any obligation to his entertainer with regard to the normal conduct of the house, refusing to rise for dinner until long after the hour at which it was served. A few days were enough to convince these good-natured hosts that Mr. Savage was as impossible a guest in a private house as he was a delightful companion in the public inn ; and it took no longer for Mr. Savage to find himself deeply disappointed in the quality of their understandings. The consequence of this discovery, made repeatedly in a succession of instances, was, that Savage retired, with some disgust. Once more the night-cellar became his refuge when he had a few pence ; and when he had nothing, he was obliged to sleep in dark street corners, walking at intervals through the night to restore circulation or to evade uncongenial company.

Sometimes he blessed his good fortune when he found himself able to creep unobserved into the out-house of a glass manufactory still warm with the heat of the furnaces which had died down after the day's melting. On these occasions, before he settled himself to sleep, his mind dwelled in luxurious if momentary contempt on the superior comforts enjoyed in houses like Lord Tyrconnel's or Mrs. Brett's. But even when he found no place in a glass-house, he felt no envy towards either of these persons; the brain very soon becomes incapable of entertaining comparisons in a winter wind that grows colder and colder between the starlight and the dawn.

XXXIII

The performance of *The Coffee House* at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane in the year 1737 was an occasion for an outburst of ill feeling against its author, the reverend James Miller. The piece was lively enough ; so was the acting ; but the gentlemen of the Temple asserted that in the characters of Mrs. Notable, the mistress of the house, and her daughter Kitty, an unmannerly attack was made on two excellent ladies who kept a coffee-house in the neighbourhood of the Templars. Nor was the author's assurance that no offence was intended of much avail. It might be true, as he protested, that he had borrowed his comedy from the French ; but this was no excuse for so unconventional a method of exposing innocent persons to ridicule. The play, it must be admitted, made an equivocal appeal ; for, apart from the characters of the two ladies, it contained a satirical portrait of a comedian answering to the name of Cibber in the performance and actually impersonated by Theophilus Cibber, who, fourteen years before, had acted the part of the Earl of Somerset in *Sir Thomas Overbury*.

No public event in which the name of Cibber

appeared, could escape the notice of Savage. He had helped to ridicule the father, and he had never ceased to regret that he had warmly praised the son in the preface to his published tragedy. Perhaps Theophilus had taken no pains to dissociate himself from the contemptuous silence with which Mrs. Brett had treated the letter addressed to her by Savage from prison. That any man should enter so fully into the spirit of caricature as to be willing to ridicule himself on the stage, could not fail to impress a lively wit; that Cibber should do it, gave to his former friend's visit to the theatre in Drury Lane additional promise of entertainment.

As the curtain rose upon the familiar scene of a coffee-house, no spectator watched the comedy with keener interest than Savage from his place in the gallery. Nor could any spectator have been more at home in the company pourtrayed: the miserly scrivener, the gay officer, the airy comedian, the pert beau, the loquacious politician, the boosing fox-hunter. Savage knew them all; there was verisimilitude, too, for him in their busy competition for the attention of Kitty Notable and in their schemes to outwit her jealous and mercenary mother.

And yet, from the easy fascination of this recognition, a bitterness disengaged itself with slow and certain effect for Savage as his eyes moved restlessly from one side of the stage to the other. An

From a contemporary print.

THEOPHILUS CIBBER, IN THE CHARACTER OF A FINE GENTLEMAN.

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amiable absurdity, so it seemed to him, distinguished the actions and the appearances of all these characters. But there was one whose remoteness from the company in which he moved suggested to Savage a radically different conception in the author's mind. And this difference made itself more and more palpable to him as the play progressed. This was the needy, dirty, unfortunate poet, the man who was for ever teasing the comedian to listen to his tragedy, when he was not quarrelling with the company for disturbing him in the laborious process of penning his lines. In vain Savage struggled to stop his mind from shaping the unwelcome conviction that in this repulsive, sinister figure, his own personality was deliberately exposed to contempt.

At first he tried to interpret this part as a satire on poets in general. Had not the scrivener described the type early in the comedy? "A fellow that flatters the living and tells lies of the dead; that talks of nothing but heroes and kings, and converses with nobody but fidlers and pickpockets; a mumping, hungry pimp that's always crowding at other people's tables." Aye, but what was this, if not an allusion to Lord Tyrconnel's patronage? The studied neglect with which the comedian treated the poet, insinuated a more malicious message as one scene succeeded another. Whenever Cibber spoke, Savage felt as if the actor was addressing him in a spirit of pitiless derision, as when he said,

"People who mock others that squint, come to squint themselves at last."

Still he struggled against the bitter humiliation that was stealing upon him, and strove to keep his eyes and his mind on the other persons who swiftly develop the action of the play in happy indifference to the presence of that solitary, superfluous figure. Rich Mr. Harpie, the scrivener, stands the best chance of winning Kitty until the comedian hits upon a happy device for discrediting him in the eyes of her powerful mother. He lures him into a quarrel. Harpie draws his sword and Cibber falls. "Oh, mercy on me!" cries the widow. "A man killed in my house! I am ruined for ever!" There is a rush for the watch. . . .

Savage could bear it no longer: it was the scene at Robinson's. Was this Cibber's revenge for *The Dunciad?* Oh, there had been other brawls in coffee-houses; but this reflection was powerless to check the sick horror that rose at that terrible remembrance. Before he left the theatre, he glanced once more at the figure of the poet; but, though he longed to glance away as swiftly, his eyes remained fixed as in a fascination, noting the cut and colour of the long, mud-stained coat, the pallid face, the sharp, hunger-stricken features. What further room for doubt? Who in that audience would have detected the substitution, had he changed places with the actor on the stage? The portrait

was minutely, relentlessly faithful. He felt an ungovernable fury rising within him, and fled from the theatre, himself fearful of what might happen if he should look for a moment longer on that picture of his own deformity.

To write a lampoon on the author of *The Coffee House* was an easy task; and Savage exhausted his anger in a succession of violent expletives. But when the satire was composed, he felt no desire to publish it. Fresh calamity came upon him in the same year in the death of the Queen. What was to become of the Volunteer Laureate's pension? Personal sorrow at the loss of one whom he had addressed in a strain of servile sincerity as "mother," was lessened by the indifference with which Her late Majesty had received an appeal for subscription to a new edition of his works, while she had given every encouragement to a similar project entertained by Stephen Duck, her librarian at Richmond. The more munificent Duke of Chandos had sent him ten guineas; but the Queen's indifference seemed to have set the fashion, and Savage's proposal met with few responses. There were some who, having known Savage at the zenith of his splendour when he was at Lord Tyrconnel's, shook their heads sadly now when they heard him renew his proposals for issuing a collection of his works. For he returned again and again to this cherished scheme, and was always eager to engage the attention of any one who would listen to his careful

observations on the type to be used for his poems, the shape and style of the volume, the phraseology suitable for advertisements, and the devices for extending the sale of the book.

But Savage was not discouraged by other people's misgivings. The Queen was dead. On the next anniversary of her birthday he addressed some verses to His Majesty, in which he extolled the virtues of the dead lady and artfully depicted the surviving sovereign eager in his bereavement to show reverence for her memory by continuing to bestow her bounty on those whose merit outlasted the life of their great patroness. In his more sanguine moments Savage nursed the hope that the pension might be continued without the necessity of producing an annual poem. Such mechanical efforts were irksome, and he had a desire to write a new tragedy on the subject of Sir Thomas Overbury. The friend under whose protection he was living at this time now found it necessary to dismiss him owing to a change of residence; and Savage saw that it would be advisable with all haste to ascertain more closely what the King intended with regard to his pension.

Time was pressing on; the other pensioners of the late Queen had been reassured as to the continuance of their moneys. Savage was indignant that he alone should be excluded from the list of beneficiaries. He had friends in the Exchequer who warned him not to display any heat in the renewal

From a photograph by Emery Walker after a painting in the National Portrait Gallery by Michael Dahl.

GEORGE II.

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of his application. Heat was distasteful to ministers. But he was not to be controlled by diplomatic considerations. His grievances were piled one on another, until there was no longer room for human forbearance. The Queen had died with her promise of further promotion for her poet unfulfilled. Walpole had blackened the name of friendship by the affectionate language in which he had so falsely pledged himself to give Savage the next post that should fall vacant at a salary of two hundred pounds a year. Savage was tired of bowing to the fate neatly epitomised in his couplet:

> To starve and hope; or, like chameleons, fare
> On ministerial faith, which means but air.

He would no longer cringe to Walpole.

At the minister's next levee he presented himself. Who could have guessed, from the trim elegance of his attire, that this was the ragged poet held up to ridicule in Miller's comedy? No clothes looked borrowed upon that shapely body. But hunger and wrong sharpened the voice in which he demanded of Walpole to know the reason for which he had been neglected; and the hatred of a lawless despair shone in his eyes as Walpole returned his question with a cold stare. Was this the polished author, the man with a power of urbanity that the statesman himself would gladly have possessed on some occasions? This, the graceful companion at Tyrconnel's table to whom all eyes had so recently

turned in admiration? The man who addressed him wore the look of some fierce animal, with the knives of the huntsmen at his throat, at bay in an attitude of defiant supplication.

And, as he spoke, Savage knew that he was impotent, and that the stone walls of officialism were closing round him to cut off all prospect of his request being granted. Swiftly and sullenly he passed through the gaudy assembly, the smiling crowd of flatterers and flattered, into the street, the only place that could not disown him. Why could he not have stayed in the sordid surroundings of his childhood? What was the will of that mysterious force which had urged him to the discovery of his birth, with its long train of fatal consequences? Why could he not have grown up a happy cobbler, who sang merrily to his work? Why had he been "sported into the world," as he had written of himself, "a kind of shuttlecock between law and nature?"

XXXIV

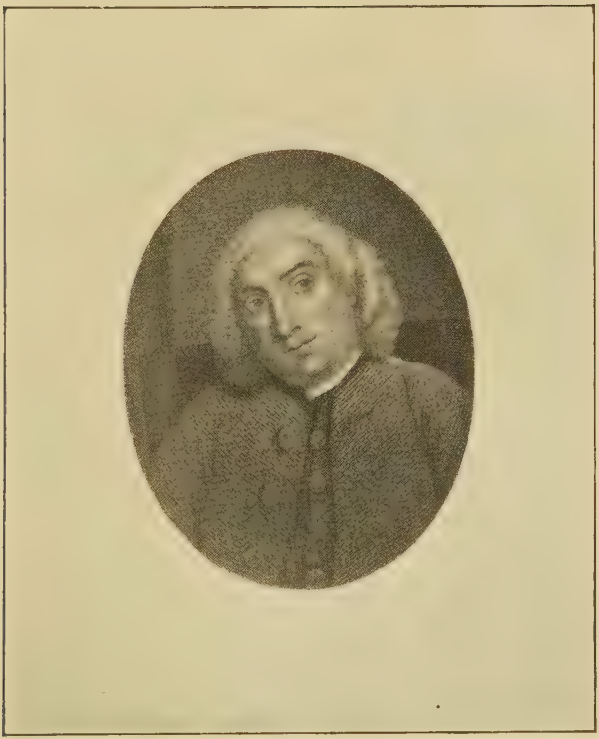
Of all Savage's companions at this time, none was dearer to him than Samuel Johnson, the clever young man who had just settled in London to make by his pen a livelihood for himself and his elderly wife. In the impatience with which the biographers of the great Doctor have sought to explain his intimate association with one so inferior to him in learning and in character as Savage, they have missed the simple reasons which account for the friendship and failed to derive from it material which, rightly seen, enriches the pictures of both the lives it concerns.

When Johnson came to London in 1737, nobody in the town had heard of him, while nearly everybody had heard of Savage. The author of *The Wanderer* was more than ten years older than the young and inexperienced schoolmaster from the country. He knew his London not only as the map-maker knows it, but as it is known by the satirist and the man of letters. He was out of favour with the great; but it was not long since he had been in favour. Mr. Pope was still a sincere if somewhat distant friend. And of the leading men and women of his time there were few concerning whom Savage

had not something authentic to communicate. He was indeed a walking dictionary of contemporary celebrities ; and to his knowledge of who was who, he added a nice judgment of what was what.

Johnson, young as he was, had a keen taste for distinctions in the estimate of personalities. If his experience both at Lichfield and Oxford had so far lain chiefly in books, he was on that account none the less curious of persons. And Johnson, at least when he was obscure, had the practical instinct to discern superiorities of advantage in others which might be cultivated into a source of profit for himself. He who became so great a talker could make a very good listener.

To the differences which attracted the one into the other's company it must not be forgotten to add another ground for common sympathy. They were both miserably poor, incurably proud. When Johnson was at Oxford he was so poor, that he wore his shoes until his feet showed through them. But when somebody placed a new pair at his door, he indignantly threw them away. The memory of this may well have recurred to his mind when one day he met Savage resplendent in a scarlet cloak embroidered with gold lace, his toes peeping through his shoes. And he was right, as the following anecdote will prove, in guessing that Savage was no less quick than himself to scorn a gift offered with more zeal than discrimination. A friend who wished to be of service to Savage had left



From an engraving by E. Finden from a miniature formerly worn in bracelet by Mrs. Johnson.

SAMUEL JOHNSON.

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for him a message that he would find a suit of new clothes at a coffee-house, of which the name was given, while the name of the donor was suppressed. But Savage refused to enter the house until the parcel addressed to him was removed.

Johnson did not stop first to consider if his new friend's distress was due to his own folly. He saw a man ten years older than himself in poverty, highly accomplished, if not learned ; a finished type of the town ; easy, good-natured ; with a store of merriment no misfortune could exhaust or embitter. Time and the opportunity afforded by frequent intercourse soon revealed the elder man's weaknesses ; but the discovery served only to deepen the younger man's compassion. Johnson was beginning his study of life, and something of the love which must always accompany observation at once keen and tender, settled permanently upon Savage. It flattered the neophyte in letters to be entrusted by this man with a knowledge of his intimate miseries. How well placed that trust was to prove, Savage never knew. But for Johnson, Savage's personality would have died with him ; and if, like every other man, Johnson could be mistaken in his facts, unlike most other men, he never misconceived any character to the study of which he gave serious thought. For a literary man, Samuel Johnson was singularly free from illusions as to the character of those with whom he consorted.

And in Johnson Savage saw a sympathetic young

man, almost willing to be regarded in the light of a pupil, at least willing enough to listen and be led—misled, perhaps; for Savage was no fitter company for young Johnson than Steele had been for young Savage. To look upon the wine when it was red, and to love idle company; to mock at the world's rulers and curse the well-to-do—such were a few of the pleasures pursued with much spirit by the two companions. No better guide through the taverns of London could be found than Savage; and it was he who unlocked for his friend those hospitable academies of conversation in which Johnson never ceased to find enchantment. Savage was at home in them, as he was in any place into which necessity or chance compelled him; but his natural place was at the table of a magnificent patron; while for Johnson the tavern chair became "the throne of human felicity."

Often the money they could raise between them was less than enough to buy the sordid shelter of a night-cellar, to say nothing of the comforts of a tavern. Then they would pace the squares of Westminster and warm themselves with feverish talk. Was it only chance which kept them on these occasions from the society of Mrs. Johnson? Most likely the elderly mercer's widow would have chilled the aristocratic Mr. Savage, or even excited his ridicule, as she excited Garrick's. There is no need to assume that Savage even knew of her existence; for he was not curious about Johnson as Johnson was curious about him.

He knew too many people to know of all of them whether or not they were married; and domesticity was a dull rock on which to split the ship of conviviality. Savage was always mariner enough to steer clear of it. Not that he professed any prejudice against marriage; but the atmosphere of the house, with its orderly and complicated ritual, became stranger and stranger to the man of no settled habitation.

Savage was indeed most "himself," as it is called, when loitering penniless with a comrade through the streets after dark, his soul buoyed up by a desperate freedom that mocked at the malice of misfortune. Such was his mood when, one night, he and Johnson perambulated St. James's Square in rhapsodical agreement on the vices of Sir Robert Walpole's Government. How they inveighed against the minister's mad scheme of excise, his ignominious propensity for peace, his coarse, cynical statesmanship, his shopkeeper's language —for was it not he who said of the "patriots" led by Bolingbroke "All those men have their price"? What words were strong enough for poets and young men who loved their country to condemn so base, so unkingly an outlook? As the dawn crept into the sky the two men still circled briskly round and round, their voices accompanied alone by a persisting plash of water; for the city was still asleep. What an initiation, this, for the young country schoolmaster into the mysterious spirit of the town! What a scene to grave itself upon his memory!—the deserted

square, with its gaunt houses beginning to peer forth, and the watery centre faintly glimmering beneath the first beam of the sun. Stillness and emptiness were everywhere : on the pavement, in the little pleasure-boat moored near the centre of the lake where the tall fountain scattered its spray. Even Savage paused in the midst of some fierce utterance, and the rhetorical period died half-finished from his lips as he leaned upon a post opposite one of the houses, reduced to a sudden silence by the solemn advent of another day.

XXXV

If the fellowship of distinguished men could have paid his bills, Savage never had much cause for despair. It is true that every day added to the number of persons who shrugged at the mention of Mr. Savage's name and exchanged glances expressive of a helpless comprehension : here was the familiar, if melancholy spectacle, of a poet thrust down from his native Parnassus to mingle with the crowd in the market-place : from that rude encounter with merchants and money-changers how could he expect to emerge with his coat upon his back ? The signature of the great Apollo himself would have carried no credit in honest banking circles ; and what man could be a hero to his creditors ?

But while a man's commercial instability can be checked in its growth, there is no device known to the City by which good manners and a lively wit may be returned dishonoured to their owner and debarred from currency among men of a polite understanding. Was the amiable and learned Dr. Birch to inquire first of Mr. Savage if he could meet his tailor's bill, before they exchanged civilities and discussed the art of poetry ? Did Thomson decline to

be initiated as a mason at Old Man's Tavern in Charing Cross when he learned that Savage was to act as Master on that occasion? Not by men like these, was Savage to be forced to confront the consequences of a beggary which he never ceased to repudiate with as much indignation as Mrs. Brett repudiated him.

But if he was flattered by the regard of these men, he was lifted into the region of enchantment in meeting, about this time, Miss Elizabeth Carter, to whom either Johnson or the publisher Cave introduced him. She was scarce twenty-two years of age, and had as yet done comparatively little to earn the fame which drew from Johnson the assertion that "she ought to be celebrated in as many different languages as Lewis le Grand." Savage saw in her the perfect union of beauty, genius, learning and virtue; this was an occasion too valuable to let slip without obtaining permission to send her a copy of the *Life* which had been issued while he was in prison on trial for the murder of Sinclair. In his letter accompanying the little book he pointed out a few inaccuracies in the writer, declaring the "mean nurse" of the narrative to be "quite a fictitious character," and the person who took care of his early boyhood to be "one Mrs. Lloyd, a lady that kept her chariot, and lived accordingly." He wrote that he lost her when he was seven years of age, and passed under another name till he was seventeen, but not the name

From an engraving by J. R. Smith after a painting by J. Kitchingman.

ELIZABETH CARTER.

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of any person with whom he lived. As if to complicate the task of disengaging the veracity of his own story from the tangle of irresponsible details with which the accounts of other men, no less than those of himself, had formerly embroidered it, he credited his own letter, which was very long, with inaccuracy, and brought it to a conclusion with a panegyric of Miss Carter at once so extravagant and so cumbrous that it suggests a mind disordered by a sentiment stronger than admiration.

Miss Carter acknowledged the receipt of the book the same day, and disclaimed all title to the compliments; whereupon Savage at once composed a second letter insisting on their appropriate nature, and passed from her "most obedient" into her "most affectionate" servant! If his poverty could win for him the regard of the young lady, he could easily contrive, in that ecstatic condition, to be thankful that he was poor. That there could exist for him any obligation to earn commercial independence, that such a course might be regarded as a solemn duty, would have seemed ludicrous, even immoral. No man could have believed more firmly that it was wrong to take advantage of another; how else than by taking such advantage could a poor man acquire a fortune? The superiority of this point of view will always find admirers as, under the stress of adversity, it has too often led, and will continue to lead, to disaster.

Savage's friends were now very much more concerned about his future than Savage himself. They

could afford to look beyond the morrow, while he could not. After some deliberation, it was agreed that Pope should write to him and hint at a pension to be provided by subscription which would enable Savage to enjoy that freedom from financial embarrassment indispensable to the steady pursuit of literary projects. Artful Pope was at his best in this stage of his delicate mission. His letter expressed concern "for the miserable withdrawing" of Savage's pension, and held out hopes of a competence "without any dependence on those little creatures which we are pleased to call the great."

The spirit of the letter was entirely acceptable; even the proposal that Savage should retire into Wales could be regarded with satisfaction. Here, in the peaceful solitude of the country, he would be able to complete his new version of *Overbury* for the stage. He would then return to London to enjoy the fruits as well as the triumph of his labours. With the imagined rejuvenescence of his London reputation, the country assumed for his tired brain an enchanting significance; he saw himself in a paradise of seclusion, a place made beautiful by an unlimited supply of flowers and nightingales. That this invitation into the country would be the prelude to a series of indignities, he did not at all suspect. He was the first, perhaps, of a long line of indigent writers surviving to this day whom their friends or relations have always been eager to decoy into the country for no other

reason than that they are apt to be both more expensive and more importunate in the town.

Savage's friends were delighted at his impatience to be gone. Unfortunately much remained to be arranged before his departure; meanwhile they persuaded him to take lodgings within the liberties of the Fleet, so as to avoid his creditors. Here they sent him a guinea every Monday, with a view, no doubt, to accustoming him to the sum proposed as a regular supply in his retirement. Savage had spent his guinea by Tuesday morning without any intention of accustoming his supporters to the irregularity of his conduct, but simply because he preferred luxury on one day to bare necessity on seven.

Vexed by counsel which he did not seek, humiliated by restrictions which seemed to him needlessly minute, the unhappy man was never more surprised than when a tailor waited upon him one morning with instructions to take his measure. This was to place his misery on the lowest level, with that of men like Samuel Boyse, his grovelling contemporary, who sat all day in bed with a blanket round him and a hole in it through which to push a hand to write his miserable verses. The poorer Savage became, the more sensitive he grew to the minute shades distinguishing his condition from that of still more unfortunate persons. He may have pawned his shirt, but who could say of him, as it was said of Boyse, that he had been seen running about without breeches

in paper collar and cuffs? The benevolent committee were amazed at the violent indignation of the man whom in their painstaking generosity they were anxious to present with a new suit of clothes. As practical men, they began to mistrust the feasibility of helping so unpractical a beggar.

Pope now devoted all his influence over Savage to persuade him to a reconciliation with Lord Tyrconnel, choosing, with doubtful felicity, Sir William Lemon, the husband of Mrs. Brett's daughter, as an intermediary for the purpose. In pursuit of his plan, he submitted to Savage a draft letter addressed to Sir William which Savage was to copy and forward as his own. The letter asked assistance "for a man who really needed it as much as any man could well do." This was more candid than Savage could sanction. As he read, he chafed at the outspoken admission of his beggary. But his irritation turned to astonishment and anger, when he came upon the further admission that he was about to retire "for ever to a place where he should no more trouble his relations, friends, or enemies."

For ever! The promise looked like a threat of suicide. The grave itself could inspire no stronger language. But when he further read a servile confession of guilty conduct towards Lord Tyrconnel and an abject prayer for his forgiveness, to be entreated through Sir William in the knowledge that Tyrconnel might well be unwilling to receive a letter

from the man who had wronged him, his impatience at once took shape in a letter to Pope full of resentment and expostulation. The whole tenor of the proposed application was inconsistent with "the dignity of a gentleman in distress." He flatly declined to ask Lord Tyrconnel's pardon, which he "despised and therefore could not heartily and would not hypocritically ask it." He reminded Pope of his former letter, and took a caustic pleasure in contrasting the servility which Pope advocated in Savage with the lofty superiority which he adopted towards men of high rank in his own character, "those little creatures whom we are pleased to call the great."

Pope's "we" was the plural of royal proclamations, an "I" underlined in this sorry combination of circumstances, to the point of insolent self-glorification. He bowed to the tempest of protest from Savage and agreed to the suppression of the letter; but he never retrieved the consequences of having assumed in Savage a mendicant attitude of mind. The pain inflicted on the man he was trying to help was all the greater for being unpremeditated. No written satire, however keen, could have let in upon the tender complacence with which he looked at his own privations, a light so searching, so destructive, as this artless misrepresentation of his supposed sentiments by the one man who was universally recognised as a master in the art of understanding human character, the man he had fondly

dared to think of as a friend to whose knowledge all the delicacies of his situation might be entrusted without reserve or misgiving.

There are many ways of growing old with which mere weight of years has little to do. Grey hairs may go with great merriment ; the passage towards death in itself is a little thing ; but the sense of having performed an irrecoverable movement comes with the sudden vision of some change that has taken place within, with the vision of a mortality that is swift to confront the poet from the earliest age in which he plays with the hidden mystery of common things ; it comes in the poignant evidence of an instability in human emotions. The child can never pass a bank of violets without experiencing the living desire to pluck one. One day he passes the flowers, looking idly at them as he goes, and made conscious that the impulse to stoop and pluck is gone ; and with it is gone his childhood, not in a succession of years, but in the single moment of his discovery.

He looks curiously sad—for the moment. In that moment he has realised the presence of the Reaper who plucks men as the child plucked violets. Such a look came into the face of Savage, such a change stole into his heart, when, in the cringing, destitute creature begging a nobleman for alms, he was confronted by the picture of his altered self heedlessly offered to him by a friend as his portrait.

Of course it would have been an easy matter to

point out glaring infidelities in the likeness. His answer to Pope's letter took but a few minutes to write. But it did not satisfy him. His miserable plight had given the material to Pope for his misconception. He was none the less a beggar for refusing to act like one. He needed assistance "as much as any man could well do." Yet, only a short time before this, he would have expostulated vehemently with any one who asserted that there were no poorer people on earth than himself. The poor were those who starved without the prospect of relief. Was that the condition to which he had come? Was the fascination of his presence, the power that had won him distinction wherever he went, from his boyhood, on the wane? That must be the view of those who were so solicitous about his future, that in their zeal they poisoned his present with their coarse admonitions. And Pope was among them; Pope, the man for whom he had worked, whose esteem he cherished more than that of any other living writer. What sharper malice could fate exercise than to appoint this man as the instrument to wound the self-esteem of his devoted pupil?

Savage did not know of the humiliations he was spared; he only resented those inflicted on him. The total subscription it was found possible to raise amounted to less than fifty pounds for a year; and Pope engaged himself to supply nearly half this money. Savage troubled himself little about such details. He

was eager to be gone, to be outside the range of his benevolent visitors, with their pettifogging precautions for his betterment. His spirits were stifled in the daily elaboration of minute plans. It was midsummer; and he longed to look on green valleys from a mountain-side, to feel the light that comes from great expanses of sky, to hear the swelling symphony of birds' notes as evening glides upon the day. Here, in the lodgings of the Fleet, all was dark and narrow, and the air was foul with the odours of the city. His ears ached with the emphasis of his miserly patrons, who never ceased to exhort him to a course of frugal living. Who could know better than he the folly of extravagance? Was not his sole ambition to have leisure to revise his poems and complete his new version of *Overbury?* He had shown every symptom of agreement with their most obvious recommendations. What more could they want of him?

So at length, on a July day in the year 1739, they let him go, carrying with him fifteen guineas, which were to provide for the expenses of his journey into Wales and of some part of his sojourn there. But before he entered the stage-coach which was to take him on his way, he paid a visit of farewell to the young man with whom he had so often talked and walked the night into the morning. After the monotony of the company he had been obliged to court for the arrangement of his pension, it was

doubly sweet to bask in the sun of Johnson's superior understanding, his large and tender courtesy. Here was one to whom a poet could lay bare his soul. When the moment came for this leave-taking, Savage felt a sudden contraction of sorrow and his eyes filled with tears. If the others misunderstood him, this was a friend who understood him only too well. The town was talking, talking of Mr. Samuel Johnson's *London*, a poem for which Savage himself had provided the central figure, a poet turning his heel upon the crime-stained city for the pure air of Cambria's solitary shores, denouncing the clamour and the corruption of men in power, their brutal oppression of the poor, their un-English idolatry of slippery French fashions. Even this very leave-taking had been prefigured in the poem, where the two friends, after their impassioned converse, are represented as standing silent in thought on the banks of the Thames, tasting the deep beauty of the scene—Greenwich smiling upon the silver flood —before they utter the last farewell.

XXXVI

It is easy to picture the rueful faces of Savage's supporters when, a little more than a fortnight after his departure, they received an intimation from him that he was without money, and yet upon the road to Bristol. If they had thought of him at all, it had been to congratulate themselves that the Bristol Channel rolled between them and the petulant, captious creature whose distress they had been at so much pains to relieve. Now they were to learn that it took this Mr. Savage something more than fifteen days, and much more than fifteen guineas, to make himself so remote from London as had been agreed upon. The danger of his conceiving a sudden resolution to abandon the whole project of his retirement determined them to send more money. Of course he might use it, if he were so minded, to return at once to London; but there was less likelihood of his acting in opposition to their wishes, if they complied with his, than if they thwarted him. So much had been made clear to them by his previous conduct; and so the money was sent.

On reaching Bristol, Savage found an embargo laid

upon the shipping, which prevented his obtaining a passage to Swansea at once, as he had intended. The circumstance in no way disconcerted him. Here was an opportunity, none the less delightful for being unforeseen, of acquainting himself with the character of a wealthy sea-port, studying the inhabitants, tasting such pleasures as it offered. Everything tended to make his enforced stay highly satisfactory. Bristol had heard nothing of his humiliations, but something of his splendour. He glided swiftly into a celebrity, which evoked all his powers for captivating society. Opulent merchants vied one with another to entertain him, public assemblies to do him honour. The confinement and depression of those last months in London were exchanged for the inspiriting liberty of intercourse which he now enjoyed with the most distinguished residents of Bristol. Their hospitality sustained him at an elevation which he would have been unable to preserve on his own resources; but he readily acquiesced in the favours which were heaped upon him as an eminent guest in an unknown city. Experience had made him singularly adroit in exploiting such a cordial welcome with becoming grace; and if some of the compliments bestowed upon him were less delicate than those formerly lavished upon him by the rank and fashion of the metropolis, he knew how to make allowances, sometimes even to recognise merits in provincial manners and local peculiarities.

In a man so long habituated to vicissitudes as

Savage, the philosophic indifference to the future is less astonishing than the rapidity with which all traces of past depression vanish in the sunlight of a new prosperity. No fish could dart more unconcernedly about the pool to which, after anxious moments of withdrawal, he has been restored by the fisherman angling for a different captive, than Mr. Savage moved about the town of Bristol ; now pausing in idle meditation by the High Cross on College Green ; now spying the forest of tall masts in the busy harbour ; singling out the foreign vessels ; nursing a fancy of imagined voyages to the Baltic Coast or the West Indies. In that contemplative figure who could guess the enforced exile fleeing from his creditors, threatened and cajoled by his patrons, an object of pity to the friends, of ridicule to the enemies he had left behind him ?

Yet, for all the gay company in which he once more moved, Savage had no desire to prolong his stay in Bristol. His mind still groped for the serenity of complete seclusion. Solitude in the midst of a crowd is hard to bear ; but solitude on some mountain height swept by wind or rain, canopied with cloud or starlight, was a state of which he yearned to taste the harmony. His brain was tired ; and the senseless chatter of the meanest sparrow seemed to him to make sweeter music than the pompous dialogue of wealthy philanthropists and municipal bigwigs. There were moments, when the vapours of flattery curling

about him wherever he went, assumed, to his imagination, the shape of worms which he would have liked to crush under his heel.

When his health had been revived by a long succession of good dinners, he could not avoid the reflection that the best Bristol society afforded but a pale reflex of that brilliance with which he had so often been regaled by the men of fashion and the professional wits of London. The eloquent plea of the hermit in *The Wanderer* for the true benefits of renunciation, written in conditions of affluence and ease, recurred to him with novel force, now that necessity compelled him to test its value by a practical application to his own life. It was in this ecstatic mood of the hermit, originated by his own poetic fancy, that he hastened to engage a passage to Swansea as soon as the embargo was removed from the shipping.

In the meantime his supporters in London were growing more and more indignant at the tone of the letters with which he honoured them, letters delightful as literary compositions, but entirely destitute of the humility for which they could not help looking from one depending for his very subsistence upon their bounty. When they expected an ebullition of grateful thanks, he wrote of Bristol Fair. Exasperated by his incorrigible equanimity, one after another found a pretext for withdrawing his support, until Pope was left almost alone to carry out the invidious task of

appeasing Savage's resentment at the diminution of his salary.

The exiled poet wrote in a high strain of expostulation; the sordidness of his supporters was never more clear to him than now, as he reflected on their conduct while pacing through the scenes of noble desolation which he had chosen for his retirement.

Something of the industrial spirit of a mining country communicated itself to him and added an unexpected element to his appreciation of the country about Swansea. As he followed the curves of the low-lying hills that formed a belt about the bay, he was impressed with no sheer beauty of colour or design, but with the perception that they formed a veritable surface of earth, beneath which the sons of men were delving busily to extract rich minerals. At first it was a sinister impression; but in time he learned to love the message of this new environment, although it was graver than what in his imagination of the place he had pictured. Birds sang overhead, for all the dark labour that was done under the earth; the air was pure. In a mood of calm satisfaction Savage again began to work at his tragedy. This time it should indeed be a masterpiece; and in its performance he looked forward with certainty to both success and profit. As he wrote, he saw himself again a figure of irresistible attraction in London, the author of a tragedy drawing applause from men and women of the most divergent opinions.

Those who had patronised him should boast of his acquaintance. So he worked day after day, until the long scenes of his play crept to completion. Then he wrote to London to announce his intention of returning to make the necessary arrangements for its production.

To his surprise the proposal met with the most determined opposition. Pope advised him to place the tragedy in the hands of Thomson and Mallet, who would prepare it for the stage; a committee of his friends would receive the profits and pay out of them an annual pension to the author. A brave notion! He was to be kept in leading-strings like a tame bear! He was to be granted an allowance out of the money he earned by his own industry! Could charity, the charity of men, go further?

He had made plans for raising a subscription for his works in Wales, and had prospects of conducting them to a successful issue. But he would not stay for this; he would go back at once and face the whole army of creditors, oppressors, persecutors, false friends, who lay in wait for him in London. He would see Edward Cave, the publisher of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, St. John's Gate, and enlist his sympathies, besides those of their common friend, Samuel Johnson. He would see Thomson and Mallet too, not as the humble supplicant begging for alms, but with the manuscript of a tragedy in his pocket, which would make a fortune for the manager of the Theatre Royal

in Drury Lane as well as for himself. Even Alexander Pope should confess the cowardice and the folly of his advice.

And then, in the very climax of his infuriation, when he could not let his eyes alight on a vessel in the bay without speculating on the date of its departure and the possibility of its bearing him away from the region made hideous to him by his own anger, he suddenly forgot everything which had led up to its outburst. A new experience came upon him, making all accustomed objects of satisfaction or disappointment remote, incredibly insignificant. London itself dwindled to a mere abstraction in his thoughts. He had left it, in order by solitude to heal the wounds of a bruised brain. What was it that suddenly overwhelmed him with the conviction that the tragedy of life could not be excluded by retiring to a remote part of the country in obedience to the visionary precepts of an imaginary hermit in a romantic poem ?

In his hours of recreation he wandered out of Swansea to taste an even deeper solitude than in the immediate neighbourhood of his daily life. As he reflected now, he wondered if this passion for being alone had tempted the divine retribution. Swansea was far enough from all that he associated with the activity of his personal emotions ; for him it was a handsome workshop and nothing more. Llanelly was still further : a tiny handful of houses scattered like seed blown from the wind upon that lonely

coast. By what miracle had he been guided from the highway of his sober occupation into this by-way of unreasonable ecstacy? Oh, Llanelly was unspeakably fair. The ruined castles around Swansea were vulgar sights for tourists' eyes in comparison with this. And in Llanelly he contemplated the ruin of his own peace of mind, and was unable to take his eyes from the picture. How idle to make plans! how futile the attempt to fly from the world that is within!

It had taken him many days to reach this secluded part of Caermarthenshire. But who could measure, in the swiftness of its flight, the exact space of time taken by Beauty incarnate to pierce the cobweb of a poet's fancy with a single glance, and bring him, quivering with surrender, to her feet? The rocky shore of Llanelly was fair indeed, but how much fairer Llanelly's incomparable daughter! In Bristol men and women had fought a passage to acquaintance with the elegant Mr. Savage. In Llanelly no creature had heard his name.

He learned who she was—a widow; and the little boy with whom he saw her walk, her son. She was a great lady in that little neighbourhood which had known and loved her family for generations. He was made acquainted with her; stood often in the same room with her; spoke with her. But it was in the unspoken things, that he felt he bore a relation of novel and sweet intimacy towards her. For a long

period he trod secret heights in her presence. But once more he was to feel the sharp edge of unstability in human emotions.

Of a sudden the need of expression overpowered him. In what words did he celebrate the death of the poet and the birth of the lover within him, of the man on whose lips language flutters like a maimed bird, as he strives to articulate the inexpressible? Did he frighten her with some story of his own shameful birth and of the grotesque cruelty of his mother; grasping in a blind and premature impulse of nature at her affection, before he had made certain that it was his, both to hurt and to adore? On the cause which separated them he was silent, even in the poems which still survive to record the hopelessness of his passion.

To awaken from the dream by which he had suffered himself to be beguiled, was to revive with redoubled intensity the fierce indignation which had urged him before this new happening to leave Wales. The great silence of the hills now oppressed him like a nightmare. Wherever he went, the shadow of his disappointment pursued him. And it was easy to persuade himself of the practical duty without further delay to take the necessary steps for the production of his play in London. In a mood of feverish satisfaction he put the sea between him and Llanelly and returned to Bristol, where he intended only to remain a short time before proceeding further on his homeward

journey. But want of money and an aimless frame of mind prevented him from prosecuting his intentions with any vigour. Another sorrow had been thrust upon him ; and its weight still hampered his activity.

As the slow days succeeded one another, the poet's Muse began to lay sacrilegious hands upon his private grief. He sent to the young widow a copy of *The Wanderer*, together with some lines in which he vowed he suffered more in her absence, than the young man in the poem who turned hermit for the loss of his wife Olympia. He began to commemorate in verse his friendship with John Powel, who had loved and been deceived ; had loved again and been happily married, only to become at once a widower. These afflictions had but served to bring out the mildness of a character elevated by distress. Of the friends he had made in Wales none was dearer to Savage than Powel. The freshness of the poet's sorrow added tenderness to the lines in which he described that of his philosophic friend.

But Savage had no dead wife of whom to cherish the memory. Mrs. Bridget Jones was alive, and at Llanelly ; and he could not put from him the obsession of her person. Bristol offered her popularity with no less zeal than when, more than a year before, Savage had graced the merchant city with his presence. But he was yet in no mood for company. His Muse, having no respect of persons, and fainting for the lack

of a burnt-offering, saw that by tempting her devotee to an enumeration of his lady's charms he might once more become active in the service of poetry. Her artifice succeeded; and Savage, wrapping himself in the flimsy conceit of a title, *The Employment of Beauty*, after an introductory passage to describe the Graces assembling to invent the lady (limb by limb), indulged the luxury of picturing to himself his fair Bridget from toe to top. In the order in which he described the pieces of his goddess, the satyr leaping within him betrayed itself; and the dance rose to an orgy in a second poem, called *Valentine's Day*, wherein, as a lover entreating his pitiless Chloe to spare one tear at the sight of his ghost when he revisits her after death, he draws down ridicule rather than commiseration, owing to the warm licence with which he has previously described the loves of Venus and Adonis.

Disengaged from the circumstances in which these poems came to be written, they are unreadable. As lamps by which to study the grimaces of the once fashionable Mr. Savage at middle age in the toils of an unrequited passion, they are illuminative. In the process by which the woman, at sight of whom with her little boy on the sea-swept beach of Llanelly, his heart beat high, becomes first "Chloe" and ultimately a pretext for an elaborate study in female anatomy, is disclosed some of that irony which, like a Greek chorus, pursues the lives of all who, in taking their

way through the world, are for ever chalking up a picture of life on a wall by the wayside.

After that deep drop to "Chloe," it is scarcely surprising to be told that Savage also wrote an epitaph on her grandmother, a former Mrs. Jones whose benevolence, long buried, cried aloud to the distracted admirer of her granddaughter for commemoration.

XXXVII

All these poems appeared in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, and were in all probability read by Lord Tyrconnel and Mrs. Brett, by Pope and Samuel Johnson.

Irrepressible Mr. Savage! Genius, like murder, will out. His creditors in London could not distrain upon a poem published to a lady's eyebrow. His sullen benefactors still had to listen to praise of his work. Pope alone had the power, but wanted the malice to expose its inferiority. *The Employment of Beauty* called forth a rapturous response from an enthusiastic friend in Southminster who, without being aware of what he was doing, relegated the fate of Savage's "Chloe" to the oblivion she deserves by declaring that she put Waller's "Sacharissa" in the shade.

Meanwhile, Savage spent day after day in Bristol, revolving plans for his return to London, the prospective magnificence of which grew in his imagination as his abilities to compass a return at all, declined. Certainly, if London were to be taken, it must be taken by storm. Even Bristol was being made acquainted with the fact that Mr. Savage's continued

presence could not be enjoyed for nothing. A subscription of thirty pounds was raised, with little difficulty, to relieve the poet's needs. Being now in a position to take the long-planned journey, he was the first to see the necessity of delaying it. The claims of Bristol on his respect must not be sacrificed with so little ceremony. To carry away the thirty pounds as soon as he had received it, would be a most unhandsome proceeding. If Bristol was a city of merchants, this was an additional reason for a poet to preserve a proper distinction between his sense of honour and theirs. It would have shown a guilty ostentation to disperse all the money he had received in entertaining those who had given it him ; but he found others on whom to lavish a splendid and careless hospitality.

He had now been long enough in Bristol to have enemies as well as friends. His easy habit of borrowing money from those whom he had no prospect of repaying, attracted the censure of the people whose whole claim to respect and consideration rested on the soundness of their financial principles ; others more lenient to this particular failing found him an inconsiderate guest. This "Wanderer" was always wandering into the house at unseasonable hours ; prolonging his visits without regard to the duties and obligations of those whose entertainment he seemed to patronise rather than to accept as a favour. Occasionally he made himself so much at home at other men's tables

that the rest of the company betrayed a feeling of being at sea. The prospect of a visit from Mr. Savage, once an unmixed delight, was now marred by a growing uneasiness that it might be a source of general embarrassment.

Sometimes this misgiving was removed when the visitor arrived. He could be as engaging as ever; could tell a story with that ease of delivery and close economy of digressions which disclosed a master in effects; and to people whose lives lay far away from any intercourse which could give them an insight into the characters of eminent persons, his intimate account of them in some private capacity, made all the livelier by delicate imitation of a gesture, or the tone in a voice, gave rare satisfaction.

But the occasions on which Mr. Savage was not at his best, multiplied; he frequently forgot to whom he had already communicated the stories he liked to tell; and as the telling of them came to depend more and more exclusively on his own inclination, and his desire for pre-eminence in the conversation, and less and less on the readiness of his audience to hear them, he often fatigued and irritated those who lacked the courage or the cruelty to interrupt him. From the high pinnacle of admiration to which his first appearance in Bristol had elevated him, he now slipped at a gathering pace, until it was made clear to him that even toleration of his presence was yielding to glib pity of his misfortunes and to a contempt for his

follies, which betrayed itself in the involuntary note of indignation with which his appeals for aid began to be received.

Bristol society resolved itself into committee on the subject of the distressed poet. Respectability and Christianity put in their conflicting claims to consideration. Nothing appeared to satisfy this incorrigibly proud beggar. It was a difficult case. Nobody wanted to be unkind ; but what was to be done with a man whose habit, no less than his habits, inspired aversion in polite company ? Even vice could not be suffered to go unclothed in the houses of worthy citizens ; and it would be highly illogical to extend such a dangerous privilege to mere genius. The sight of Mr. Savage reflected discredit on all who consented to be seen with him. It was particularly disgusting, when he emerged from those secret retreats in which he still indulged himself in an excess of meat and drink whenever a few guineas enabled him to stem the tide of hunger that was for ever rising, rising.

During these orgies he laughed to himself at the rich man's pleasure in abundance of good cheer. What did such men know of the burning satisfaction which eating could convey to the stomach faint with long fasting ; drinking, to the lips parched and withered with long thirst ? He had done with the vanities of the world, with scarlet cloth and lace of gold, with periwigs and buckles. Naked came he from

his mother's womb. A horseman's great-coat was all he needed to wrap his miserable body from the indecent gaze of the multitude.

And with this admission came the decline in decency which was inevitable for one who, until now, had regarded elegance as his birthright, and the elaborate care of his person as a pleasurable duty. He conceived it to be part of life's lesson to inure himself not only to poverty and rags, but also to neglect and the foul conditions which are the recognised badge of distress. All that he had suffered before, appeared to him to be on another plane of misfortune. He had often hungered for a meal; but the hope of relief had never been quite extinct in him; it had been kept alive, however feebly, by a stream of charity which, if at times it had grown thin, had never run dry.

When his pocket was empty—and it was nearly always empty—he searched the horizon of his despair in vain for some glimmer of light that should hint at rescue. Every man at whose house he called was now from home. So, when a ship is foundering in mid-ocean, the captain's eye travels round and round for the light on a masthead that never shines, or for the faint low lines of land that lie inaccessible, invisible behind relentless miles of mist and tempest. And as the captain's eye steadies itself at last in the knowledge of inevitable doom, so Savage came at last to face the spectacle of his own ruin.

When Pope wrote for him that he needed assistance "as much as any man could well do," Savage demurred to the accuracy of the phrase, apart from resenting its choice to form part of an appeal supposed to issue from himself. But the sting of the phrase lay in its prophetic import. The last few years of his life had brought him nearer and nearer to that gulf of misery from the mere description of which he had recoiled, profoundly incredulous of its appropriateness to his own condition. The contrast of splendid periods of extravagance alternating with periods of want, which had enabled him to look upon his distress as a kind of amateur poverty, in spite of the real severities and privations to which it had exposed him from time to time, was now irrevocably gone. The last pretext for seeing a superiority in his own misfortunes to those of other men, was withdrawn. He knew himself to be like any other beggar in quest of a meal and a coat to cover himself.

Silently and without any bitterness or rebellion he admitted to himself that he had ceased to care about the style of the garment. Little enough he cared for the life it was his mysterious object to preserve. He wondered much at the fierce energy begotten in him by hunger. Why could he not suffer it to consume him? Death was not terrible; but life robbed of all its graces, turned from a garden of delight into a daily battle with want, enforcing the baser, material claim on one whose mind moved easily and naturally

in the city of an imagination both trim and glittering —to this life, what held him still a prisoner?

Yet it needed but the beauty of a May morning—the sight of sun upon the dew-steeped grass, the blithe carol of unseen birds, to stir the hungry lips to a benediction. More invincible than ever in such moments seemed the eternal loveliness of the world. And what else mattered? He had already behind him the days when the sordidness of his attire stung his pride like a whip. Good clothing became him, and he liked it. In earlier stages of his decline, a wrinkle in the lining of a coat was enough to disconcert him. But the time came, when the lining was so much wrinkled, that it no longer served its purpose; and he tore it out, less to increase his own comfort as he put on his coat, than to escape the critical eye and, above all, the commiseration of friends. He became aware, too, of unsuspected depths in his solicitude for the impression made by his personal appearance on unknown people in a street or a public assembly. He disliked the certainty that the gaping button-holes with their dusty threads, the frayed edges, the slatternly folds, the foul discoloration of his coat, should provide signs to enable casual spectators to class him with beggars whose only title to notice was their misfortune. He began to avoid the daylight, to lie in bed until it was dusk, and then creep for a few hours from the garret of the obscure inn at which he lodged, returning always before the dawn could expose to

other men the defects (and the artifices for their concealment) which he knew only too well.

But this uneasiness at what other men would suppose, could not prevail in the long run against the consciousness of his own superiority. He passed through the stage of misgiving to an attitude of serene contempt. How true that it was the man, and not the coat, that mattered. And with the recognition of a conclusion so alien in its simplicity to his extravagant propensities, so remote from the cherished habits of his mind, he felt himself carried along by the desperate carelessness born of premature old age. The memory of a brilliant past gleamed fitfully at him in those intervals of ease afforded to him in occasional relief; but the brilliance seemed to belong to another Savage, between whom and himself it still gave him an odd pleasure to trace a resemblance. He talked of bygone triumphs in an impersonal strain; and only from the rapid flush coming into his pallid face, and from the sudden fire in his eye, could those chance acquaintances on whom his fascinating presence still exercised a charm, gather a hint of what this past had once meant for him.

XXXVIII

He had ceased to care what other men thought of him ; but he had not ceased to place an importance in what he thought of them. The conduct of those who had contributed to his exile was a frequent source of unbridled vituperation. They had persecuted him and outraged his most tender feelings, their charity had been " perfidiousness improving on perfidiousness, inhumanity on inhumanity " ; but their punishment would come with the successful production of the new *Overbury* ; if he could only contrive once more to reach London !

Five pounds came to him from a friend in the metropolis. He determined to go at once. It was midwinter, and for comfort no less than for decency he needed a coat for the journey.

A simple matter to buy a coat ; but for those whose decline into destitution has been as steep as Savage's, nothing that involves action is simple. When poverty shuts all the doors to self-gratification, the sudden appearance of five pounds makes chaotic light on a horizon that before was uniformly black. So many things may be done with five pounds ; and it takes time before the mind can grasp that

the satisfaction of some of the desires that rush into expression on such occasions, involves the sacrifice of others. To realise the effect of these five pounds, it is necessary to imagine Savage holding them in his hand, not with the grasp of a miser, but with that of a child clinging to a rail on its way down a flight of stairs. One by one the fancied satisfactions pass before him. Now and again he looks nervously at the palms of his hand; for there are realities to which the minds of those long practised in the exercise of imaginative thought, never grow wholly accustomed.

Yes, there are five pounds; and from the conflicting claims of possible ways in which to spend it, the coat and the journey to London assert a firm predominance. But how is he to obtain a coat? In his beggar's clothes he cannot enter a tailor's shop. Shall he bid them send some one to call upon him? In that garret? Better a friend should act as an intermediary for him. Buying a coat is indeed a complicated matter.

When he had the coat, when it covered his shoulders and tempted him once more, after long abandonment of the habit, to look at his reflection in a mirror, he was sensible of an elevation no less moral than physical. To move about like a fugitive was still a necessity; for the bailiffs hunted him every day. But he would soon be beyond their reach. Something like a touch of briskness was in his walk

when he left his lodgings, with London in his brain, its broad river, its narrow streets, its turbulent activities, the hum of many voices, the shuffle of many feet, the procession of familiar types and faces.

He took his way toward the stage-coach, reflecting, as he went, that, although it was dark, he needed not the protection of night to screen his conditions from comparison with other men's prosperity. If his coat was not splendid, it was at least warm. He reflected, too, that he was faint from want of food, and that he had only to enter a tavern to satisfy his hunger. But when he wondered what he should eat before taking his place in the coach, he discovered that he had no appetite. At the thought of meat he experienced an overwhelming nausea; and while he sought to provoke the desire of food by the imagination of the daintiest dishes, he found himself utterly unable to bestow on them more than an intellectual appreciation. He would have been as willing to eat a landscape by his friend John Dyer as the finest pasty in England.

He entered a tavern and called for a glass of brandy. A warm stomach before a long journey was at least the policy of wisdom. He had much to do on reaching London, and would need all his strength. The tavern wore an aspect all the more congenial for the knowledge that he depended on no hospitality. His fingers pressed the coins in his pocket. Of all the taverns in Bristol this was his

favourite ; a retired place, endeared to him by many a previous visit, a place in which he had made many friends, and was still regarded by the host as a valuable centre of attraction.

The night was cold ; the fire in the public room burned brightly. The hours passed ; the stage-coach went on its way. Savage still sat on. As the spirit restored warmth to his stomach, his appetite returned. He ordered a meal ; ate ravenously ; drank again. At the sight of friendly faces, and still more at their sight of his comfort, his spirits rose. Wider and wider grew the circle at his table. None so lavish as he, when opportunity made him master of a banquet. Mine host was enchanted, no less at the growing bill than at the gaiety of his guests.

Dawn creeps upon the party. One by one they steal away ; last of all, Savage, his pockets empty, his mind a blank except for that haunting suspicion of men lying in wait for him. Stealthily he glides down the whitening streets, silently climbs the stairs to his garret. The sun shines brightly through the day upon the prostrate figure heavy with sleep. At dusk he wakens, fancying the swinging of the coach and the dull rumble of wheels. Mechanically he stumbles from his bed and lights the candle which reveals to him once more the dingy squalor of his familiar room.

XXXIX

The intention to go to London was merely postponed, not abolished. He betook himself to the house of a friend, one of those men whose benevolence is for ever fortified by the obstacles it encounters. The man whom so many others had found it impossible to help, was just the man for Mr. Bowyer. Savage was peculiarly fortunate in coming across such persons. He consented, after much persuasion, to leave his inn. It was highly inconvenient to make the change. There were a hundred good reasons for staying where he was. But he could not be ungracious. The offer to entertain him was made in a handsome spirit. All the civilities were observed. No conduct was too erratic for the comprehension of Mr. Bowyer; so Savage slept all day and continued to be up and about all night, without encountering any serious opposition from the entertainer, who hoped, by granting all the conditions which represented liberty for the misguided poet, in time to acquire over him a subtle influence which could be turned to valuable account.

But no sooner was Savage's health restored to something like its normal state by the comparative regularity and the ease of his life, than he determined

to leave Mr. Bowyer. For this, there was no lack of argument. He preferred no longer to dislocate the household of another ; he had plans to mature, letters to write, persons to interview, in connection with his approaching visit to London ; all this must be done from his own address. He would take a room at The White Lion for the brief period which had now to elapse before his departure.

Mr. Bowyer betrayed neither surprise nor indignation. He smiled, agreed, offered even some friendly services to aid Mr. Savage in the execution of his intentions. Whenever Savage thought at all of Mr. Bowyer—which happened indeed rarely—he did so with satisfaction : this was indeed a worthy, an agreeable man, whose politeness was in marked contrast with the rudeness of others who tried to support and only succeeded in insulting a gentleman in distress. Mr. Bowyer hoped Mr. Savage would not hesitate to regard himself as free to visit him at any hour of the day or of the night ; he had a passion for accidental visits, for anything, in fact, which helped to relieve the *tædium vitæ*. Mr. Savage assured him that nothing would give him greater pleasure than to avail himself of the offer, should occasion present itself. After a further exchange of amiable expressions, they parted.

At The White Lion Mr. Savage had not resided many days, before he received an invitation to sup with two friends. It was to be a farewell banquet,

and neither trouble nor expense was spared to make it worthy of the occasion. Mr. Savage was deeply flattered by the sincerity of the compliment, and showed his appreciation in his accustomed manner, by staying very late ; so late indeed, that when at last he took leave of his friends, he was dismayed at the sudden thought that it would not be possible, at that hour, to obtain admittance to The White Lion. The tenth of January, 1743, was bitterly cold. Where was he to go? As he stood weighing the important question, his hand touched a key in his pocket. Fortune was on his side. This was the key to Mr. Bowyer's house. Here was the perfect opportunity to show his gratitude. Kind, thoughtful Mr. Bowyer ! Mr. Savage's room was always kept at his service.

He walked briskly to the house, opened the door, forgot to close it, and was on his way up the stairs to his bedroom, when he started at the firm grasp of a hand upon his shoulder. As he turned, he perceived by the glimmer of a lantern several figures whom he needed no stronger light to recognise as the King's officers. After a hurried conversation, conducted with decorum in a whisper, so as not to disturb the inmates of the house, Savage, having learned that his arrest was at the suit of Mrs. Read, the keeper of a coffee-house to whom he owed about eight pounds, accompanied the men to the house of a sheriff's deputy. Here he was accommodated for the rest of the night. On the following day he

addressed a letter to one of the gentlemen with whom he had supped, in which he gave the following account of his capture.

"It was not a little unfortunate for me, that I spent yesterday's evening with you; because the hour hindered me from entering on my new lodging; however, I have now got one, but such an one as I believe nobody would choose.

"I was arrested at the suit of Mrs. Read, just as I was going upstairs to bed, at Mr. Bowyer's; but taken in so private a manner that I believe nobody at The White Lion is apprised of it. Though I let the officers know the strength, or rather the weakness, of my pocket, yet they treated me with the utmost civility; and even when they conducted me to confinement, it was in such a manner that I verily believe I could have escaped, which I would rather be ruined than have done, notwithstanding the whole amount of my finances was but threepence halfpenny.

"In the first place, I must insist, that you will industriously conceal this from Mrs. S——s, because I would not have her good nature suffer that pain which I know she would be apt to feel on this occasion.

"Next, I conjure you, dear sir, by all the ties of friendship, by no means to have one uneasy thought on my account, but to have the same pleasantry of countenance and unruffled serenity of mind which (God be praised!) I have in this, and have had in

a much severer calamity. Furthermore, I charge you, if you value my friendship as truly as I do yours, not to utter, or even harbour, the least resentment against Mrs. Read. I believe she has ruined me, but I freely forgive her; and (though I will never more have any intimacy with her) I would, at a due distance, rather do her an act of good than ill-will. Lastly (pardon the expression) I absolutely command you not to offer me any pecuniary assistance, nor to attempt getting me any from any one of your friends. At another time, or on any other occasion, you may, dear friend, be well assured, I would rather write to you in the submissive style of a request than that of a peremptory command.

"However, that my truly valuable friend may not think I am too proud to ask a favour, let me entreat you to let me have your boy to attend me for this day, not only for the sake of saving me the expense of porters, but for the delivery of some letters to people whose names I would not have known to strangers.

"The civil treatment I have thus far met from those whose prisoner I am, makes me thankful to the Almighty that, though He has thought fit to visit me (on my birth-night) with affliction, yet (such is His great goodness) my affliction is not without alleviating circumstances. I murmur not; but am all resignation to the divine will. As to the world, I hope that I shall be endued by Heaven with that

presence of mind, that serene dignity in misfortune, that constitutes the character of a true nobleman—a dignity far beyond that of coronets ; a nobility arising from the first principles of philosophy, refined and exalted by those of Christianity."

XL

Savage had no wish to go to prison. Still less did he wish to be a burden to the sheriff's officer, with whom for the present he was lodged. The next few days were among the most harassing in his whole experience. People came at all hours to offer condolence and expatiate upon the most chimerical plans for the future. The future, however, was a matter of supreme indifference to Mr. Savage. He was amazed and annoyed to find so many men who prided themselves on their practical conduct in the affairs of life talking with such a wild insistence on this future. Of philosophy he himself had enough and to spare. In the discussion of systems of the universe he was a match for any man in Bristol. The author of *The Wanderer* had examined and reflected in his works many theories of happiness and the virtues. What he lacked, was the money to pay Mrs. Read; and the price of his bail was fixed at the same amount. Through the wearisome chatter of his visitors he listened with desperate resignation for some trace of a suggestion that might solve the practical difficulty with which he was beset. In his eagerness he mistook the expression of hopes for

promises, and was frequently disappointed, complaining bitterly of the way in which those who called themselves his friends were using him.

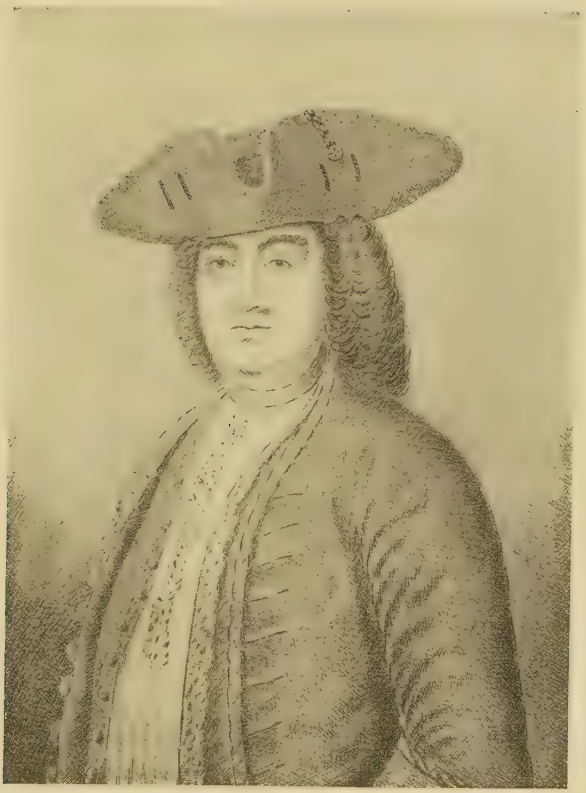
But his friends, including Mr. Bowyer, were by this time as weary of his importunities as he was of their wise counsel. It took a very little while to discover that nobody felt any obligation to part with the money ; and no other course could help Mr. Savage. When he was at last left to his own reflections, he came to the conclusion that the people who crowded about him were all too small to rise to the height of this emergency, and he accordingly determined to lay his case before Mr. Nash, who at the age of nearly seventy years was still the King of Bath. This was the accredited master in the manipulation of delicate situations, a man of some stature to whom a gentleman in distress might make his appeal in all candour, without a moment's misgiving that he might be misunderstood.

Of course Mr. Nash made the noble answer to Savage's application—a present of five guineas, with a promise to promote a subscription at Bath with all his interest. Of the promise, no more was heard. Perhaps Bath was not far enough removed from Bristol for the claims of Savage on popular sympathy and support to go unchallenged. But the five guineas enabled him to pay the sheriff's officer and effect his removal to Newgate Prison.

Here he attracted more sympathy than he needed,

and it gave him pleasure to refuse to allow his debt to be paid by a gentleman who volunteered to provide the money. As for the proposal made to make a collection for his enlargement, he treated it with scorn, and let it be known that, so far from adopting a mendicant attitude, it was his intention to apply to some Ministers of State for the proper restitution of his pension. He occupied much of his time in writing letters to those whom he thought it worth while to impress with the long story of his grievances. Had he but received the support necessary for the production of his *Overbury*, at least a competence in London would have been his fate instead of confinement in a Bristol prison ; such was his honest conviction. Yet the virtue of suffering well which he had shown himself to possess in so many calamities did not desert him. Neither did the hope of vindicating himself in the eyes of the world when he should have prepared a pamphlet embodying an apology for his life.

From a letter addressed to a friend in London on the 30th of January, the following extract has happily survived to depict the state of his mind a fortnight after his removal to prison : "I now write to you from my confinement in Newgate, where I have been ever since Monday last was se'nnight, and where I enjoy myself with much more tranquillity than I have known for upwards of a twelvemonth past ; having a room entirely to myself, and pursuing the amuse-



From an engraving after a picture by W. Hibbard.

RICHARD NASH.

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ment of my poetical studies, uninterrupted, and agreeable to my mind. I thank the Almighty I am now collected in myself; and, though my person is in confinement, my mind can expatiate on ample and useful subjects with all the freedom imaginable. I am now more conversant with the Nine than ever, and if instead of a Newgate bird, I may be allowed to be a bird of the Muses, I assure you, sir, I sing very freely in my cage; sometimes, indeed, in the plaintive notes of the nightingale, but at others in the cheerful strains of the lark."

Mr. Dagge, the keeper of the prison, fell an easy victim to Savage's charms. Never before had it fallen to his lot to associate daily with a man so courteous in his submission, so entertaining in his conversation. The relation between the two men improved as time went on. Mr. Dagge delighted in having Savage at his table; he had the wit to perceive the rareness of his opportunity; the generosity to risk the chances of repayment; the humane quality of finding pleasure in doing a service for his distinguished prisoner. Nor was his kindness confined to the exercise of hospitality. He made overtures to Mrs. Read for the release of her debtor; but the lady was obdurate, and Savage's opinion of her, as the length of his confinement became more extended, underwent a change.

Winter wore away into summer, and still the prospect of a release was remote as ever. Savage was never dull; for, when he was not receiving visits, he

spent his time either in writing or in diverting himself with the conversation of the criminals in the prison kitchen. He was devoid of the fear with which such persons inspire people of average attainments in the settled ranks of society. He believed devoutly in Pope's aphorism that the proper study of mankind was man. Books could provide no substitute for the personal contact with men of the most different propensities and convictions. The Bristol prison was now his microcosm ; and he studied it minutely. Nor was his interest in the prisoners purely scientific, for he often found opportunities to benefit those who were more miserable than himself. Of those who visited him, many were indignant at his condescending to mingle so freely with his inferiors ; but these were the many who never ceased to offer condolence at his confinement, not the few who saw in it the only way by which the extent of his misfortune could be controlled by the enforcement of a regular life.

And the few were right. In Savage, the fierce cry for liberty which so often had shut for him the door to practical independence of other men, had subsided into the humble aspiration to think and to write what he pleased. If the prison was a cage, so was the larger world outside it, as every stage in his life had taught him, from the brief time of his service as a cobbler's assistant, to the meteoric period of Lord Tyrconnel's patronage. The cobbler's shop, the rich man's house, the high-walled prison, differed less

from one another than their outward appearance gave ground for supposing. It was as if God Almighty dropped upon the heads of His peoples the variously fashioned roofs of the different buildings with an impenetrable caprice ; as if in the slow recognition of their conventional distinctions each man grew into a rigid type—the merchant in his Exchange, the statesman in his Senate-House, the lawyer in Justice Hall, the divine in his Cathedral. And the poet ? Upon his head, too, fell some roof ; but in the poet's case, God aimed carelessly, secure in the knowledge of his ultimate destination, so that often he was suffered to wander between the roofs with uplifted eyes.

XLI

Under the soothing influence of Mr. Dagge's companionship, Savage recovered enough serenity of mind to begin a new satire. The rage which might have been expected to make a troublesome prisoner was now expended on the city that had dared to turn its back on the poet's distress. Bristol should be made to stink in the nostrils of polite England. No memory of past favours from her wealthy citizens must be allowed to mitigate the ferocity with which her vices should be exposed. To give a finer edge to the satire, Britain's two sea-port cities should be brought into comparison, so that, in magnifying the splendour of London, he might the more effectually vilify the squalor of Bristol. It was easy enough to elaborate the contrast, to match unsullied Thames, so wide, so deep, with muddy Severn, narrow and shallow as a ditch ; but it was in the description of Bristol's sons that Savage unsheathed the sword of his malice. He wrote of them as ignorant Englishmen used to write of Americans in the nineteenth century—as of a people all upstarts and mushrooms, at home only in the lowest devices of

commercial astuteness ; coarse, vulgar, snobbish, insincere,

> Of thoughts as narrow as of words immense,
> As full of turbulence as void of sense !

He denounced their inelegant hospitality to the stranger, their burlesque appreciation of law and justice, their perverse morality. Although he still owed something to Bristol charity, and still received presents from many Bristol friends, he was eager to see the satire in print and sent it with that object to Mr. Cave in London, laying upon him the strictest injunctions to keep its contents a secret until publication.

Cave was mystified. He had no objection to produce the poem, but he thought it highly impolitic in the author to lay public claim to it. Nor could he understand why Savage asked him, in the same letter, to keep the secret and give it away by publishing his name. Among Savage's most valuable friends at this time was Mr. Strong, a gentleman holding a position in the Post Office. Was Savage afraid that Strong would intervene to dissuade him from issuing the satire ? With these considerations in his mind Cave wrote a letter to Savage, mildly expressing his own view of the matter, and making a suggestion with regard to the title of the poem.

Savage was unable to contain his rage on reading this letter. Was honest Dagge the only man left in the world, to whom he could speak without receiving advice ? Was his insolvency to provide any man

with an excuse for daring to tell him what to do with the creation of his own brain? Above all, was this publisher, this man whose magazine and whose pocket he had so often enriched with the contributions of his Muse, to offer him literary advice as to the choice of a title? The thing was monstrous, called for immediate and unsparing castigation. With his resentment at fever height, he at once composed an answer.

"I received yours this morning, and not without a little surprise at the contents. To answer a question with a question, you ask me concerning London and Bristol, why will I add *delineated*? Why did Mr. Woolaston add the same word to his *Religion of Nature*? I suppose that it was his will and pleasure to add it in his case; and it is mine to do so in my own. You are pleased to tell me that you understand not why secrecy is enjoined, and yet I intend to set my name to it. My answer is—I have my private reasons which I am not obliged to explain to any one. You doubt my friend Mr. S—— would approve of it. And what is it to me whether he does or not? Do you imagine that Mr. S—— is to dictate to me? If any man who calls himself my friend should assume such an air I would spurn at his friendship with contempt. You say, I seem to think so by not letting him know it. And suppose I do, what then? Perhaps I can give reasons for that disapprobation, very foreign from what you imagine. You go on in saying,

Suppose I should not put my name to it. My answer is, that I will not suppose any such thing, being determined to the contrary : neither, sir, would I have you suppose that I applied to you for want of another press ; nor would I have you imagine that I owe Mr. S—— obligations which I do not."

Where in the voluminous annals of misunderstandings between authors and their publishers can a more conspicuous example of a writer's petulance be found ? Savage had, in fact, reached the stage of misfortune in which men are so expectant of insults, that they see them where they are not. It is dangerous to offer a very old man an arm to cross a crowded thoroughfare, lest he suspect in the action a criticism of his infirmity. In Savage's perturbed vision, every day thickened the air with the daggers of his enemies pointing to bar the way against execution of any honest project. Cave made no further proposals, and the satire remained unpublished. But Savage looked forward to his release at no distant date. Good Mr. Dagge had been privately instructed to inquire into the debtor's affairs with a view to their settlement. The tender gaoler spared neither trouble nor expense to effect the liberation of his favourite prisoner. In one case he offered to extinguish a debt due to himself, if the creditor would forgo his claims on Mr. Savage. To Mrs. Read he secretly offered three guineas of his own ; but she asked for a fortnight in which to consider the proposal, and then declared

her intention to keep Savage in prison for a twelvemonth. The malicious woman refused to proceed to execution, that she might enjoy the thought of her debtor's captivity.

Savage now alluded to her in his correspondence as "Madam Wolf Bitch" and "The African Monster." By the agency of a friend, he contrived to be sent by *habeas corpus* to the Guildhall, where a rule was entered to force her to proceed to execution by a given date, failing which she would be compelled, as a creditor, to pay two shillings and fourpence a week for the privilege of keeping her debtor in gaol. His appearance in the court attained for him so respectful an attention, that he entertained the most sanguine hopes of triumphing once more over his enemies; and on his return to his room in the prison he nursed with peculiar satisfaction the image of Mrs. Read's face, twisted awry with the contending passions of avarice and revenge, when she should be informed of the Court's decision. Soon afterwards he learned that some accounts of his satire had already been spread in Bristol, and that the merchants were so much incensed that they had declared their intention of keeping him in prison at their own expense.

But he laughed at their threats, confident that when the time came for action they would be guided by the same avarice that was to free him at last from the clutches of Madam Wolf-Bitch.

XLII

Savage's favourite recreation at this time was to stand at the open door of the prison and watch the passers-by, while he breathed the sweetness of the June air as it floated to him across the flowering fields in the neighbourhood of Newgate. This unique privilege was willingly accorded to him by Mr. Dagge, to whom the character of his prisoner represented a greater security against the risk of his escaping, than stone walls and iron bars. Never before this, had Savage tasted the peculiar serenity of these hours, during which nothing occurred to interrupt the even flow of his meditations. Here, on the very threshold of a prison to which Providence or his own follies (it mattered nothing which) had guided him, he experienced a sense of freedom which neither wealth nor fame could have imparted. He was no longer agitated by the necessity of extricating himself from difficulties; his affairs had passed outside his own control. Those who had presumed upon friendship through a long succession of years, to force a man disinterested by nature into compromising his intellectual pride in pursuit of his own welfare, had completely failed in their attempt.

Of the people who glanced at that solitary, wistful figure on their way past the Newgate building, some were moved by the sight to curiosity, others to a fugitive pity; but none guessed at the singular happiness, the imperial freedom, which possessed the man. If his shoulders drooped, it was no weight of remorse that weighed them down. He neither condemned nor pitied himself. Only when he was provoked to explain his condition, he broke into passionate condemnation of others to whom he attributed it.

His sense of leisure was indefatigable, adamantine; and at the prison door he exercised it with unbounded satisfaction. His thoughts moved idly from one subject to another. Now he smiled at the complacent mien of some fat citizen on his way into Bristol town or at the graceless gambols of the turn-spit dog at his heel. Now he listened to the laughter of women at a neighbouring farm, or glanced with merry sympathy at the meeting of a man and a girl in the roadway. And when the prospect was bare of people and the noonday sun warmed the very bricks of the wall against which he leaned, he thought of Thomson's *Summer* and of languorous lines in his own *Wanderer*, and watched the marvellous diminution of the swallow as, in the full pride of unfolded wings, it would take its rapid flight right up to the eaves of a house opposite, suddenly to disappear, compact and slippery as an egg, through the tiny hole in its nest. No minister

of State ever escaped with such dexterous precision from the fulfilment of a promise, as the swallow from the sunlight, where it loved to dip and dive, into the dimness of its hanging chamber.

The Dagges were so kind to Savage, understood him so well, that his prison life was no burden ; nor was he even disposed to regard it in the light of a humiliation, except when others enforced this aspect of it upon him in their tactless utterances. His was a nature too healthy to luxuriate in grievance ; too gentle to be embittered by misfortune. But in all his trials and sufferings one sorrow could not be submerged in his philosophy, the sorrow that was kept alive for him by the continued neglect of Mrs. Brett. Not that he had made any further claims upon her attention since his promise to Tyrconnel. For nearly ten years he had been silent on her subject. But silence did not mean oblivion.

As he grew older, he saw more of other sons and other mothers in many various conditions of life, and the conduct of her whom he never ceased to regard as his mother deepened his anguish. That she hated him, was a fact burned into his brain by what she had said and done, above all by what she had deliberately refused to do. That no spark of affection could lie smouldering beneath the fire of her passionate, evil nature, was a likelihood which something within him for ever stayed from growing into certainty. It was as if the dark shape into which his brain had

fashioned her, were dogged by the imperishable presence of a shadow made all the lovelier for the sinister object from which it was cast. He thought of her as a girl, young, gracious, unspeakably fair, before the cruel disillusion of her first marriage had begun the process of undoing all that was best in her.

Of Lord Rivers, dead now for thirty years, he thought less as his father than as the faithless lover to whom he owed his mother's implacable attitude. Yet he still corresponded with a daughter of Lord Rivers, who accepted his claim to call her "sister." At his earnest request, Mr. Strong had called upon this lady in London, to acquaint her with her brother's condition in Bristol. Savage received a letter from her and one from his niece. With unchanging tenacity the man who sacrificed one friendship after another to his caprice or to his pride, clung to his passionate longing for recognition as a kinsman by some living creature. He knew that the woman who, at little more than fifty years of age, could refuse to answer his appeal to come to him when he was under sentence of death, was not to be persuaded at the age of more than seventy to travel a much longer distance to visit a prisoner for debt. Hardness like hers did not melt with the advancing years. But he could not shake from himself the fond supposition that she might be in Bristol, on her way to the Bath waters; and if any consideration could have made him break his promise to Dagge

as he stood at the prison door, it would have been the knowledge that Anne Brett was somewhere in his neighbourhood.

He knew the weakness, the folly of imagining such things. Again and again he strove to keep this "mother, yet no mother" from his thoughts. But it was of no use. Again and again the pictured reconciliation forced its way into his mind. Some day she would fall ill; the fear of death would come upon her, and she would summon him. An overwhelming tenderness took possession of him as he fancied the sad quest for forgiveness in those failing eyes. Or, when the mood was less despondent, he would think of some happy accident that should bring them together, some circumstance that should serve to bridge the gulf of tragic separation with an outburst of reciprocal humour, careless of the past, leaping high in the exultation of the moment. Some great personage, unwitting of their relationship, would introduce him to the widow of the late Colonel Brett, as the distinguished author of the new play at the theatre in Drury Lane, once more the centre of fashionable applause. . . .

In his meditation he was occasionally interrupted by the greeting of a friend who would come into Mr. Dagge's parlour to drink a negus and a pint of wine. Parson Davies and Parson Price were among his most cherished visitors. They took an interest in his literary schemes; and Price, who shared his

appreciation of punch, sent him a present of four pint-bottles of excellent rum and two of as fine a shrub. But in the improved condition of his daily life, well nourished at Mr. Dagge's table and deprived of all sudden incentives to dissipation, Savage turned the gift to no ignoble use. And Dagge was not the man to quarrel with an honest gentleman for loving a good drink.

Coming upon Savage at the prison door one fine morning, he invited him to a walk, and the two men crossed the fields that lay about the prison far into the country. All the glory of mid-June sang in the poet's ears on this expedition. Once more his soul tasted the sweet balm of nature, in sights and sounds ; in the dew-drops glistening on the flowers at his feet, and in the careless rapture of the lark as it rose higher and higher above his head, to lose the single passion of its little ecstacy in the hymn of jubilation dropped from the throats of invisible songsters at points innumerable in that opalescent sky. Until he took this walk with his prisoner, Dagge never knew the full measure of delight to be drawn from a fine morning. And in opening the secrets of water and field to his simple companion, Savage took artless pleasure. The positions of the two men were reversed : in Newgate, Dagge was Savage's prisoner ; but in the open he became his pupil. For in the whole formidable bunch of keys that opened the cells of criminals, there was not one which could

unlock the treasures so ready to unfold themselves in all their beauty to the poet's swift and tender observation.

So, as they walked, Savage plucked Dagge's sleeve, put finger to lip and pointed at the swaying stem on which a linnet perched; stopped him to hear the murmur of distant water, or to breathe in the sweetness of new-mown hay. They lingered by streams to watch the insects dance, and doubled their own leisure by watching the men at work in some field parcelled into tracts of which Savage was quick to perceive the uses. He had all the idler's steady curiosity in the business of the country, something perhaps of the schoolmaster's pleasure in imparting knowledge. So he babbled on, happy in the ease with which he communicated his own peace of mind to his companion. To walk with a brother poet like Thomson through these villages, could not have given him exactly this serenity; for soon they would have fallen into technical discussions on the art of poetry, and the shifting scenes of sky and earth would have passed but half-observed. Dagge made the perfect listener, the companion best befitting the occasion. If the poet's talk sometimes soared above his comprehension, he was content to remain lost in a respectful wonder: this Mr. Savage was indeed a prodigious thinker. For the most part, however, a brisk mind and a sensitive nature made him alive to the happiness and the spirit of his friend's discourse;

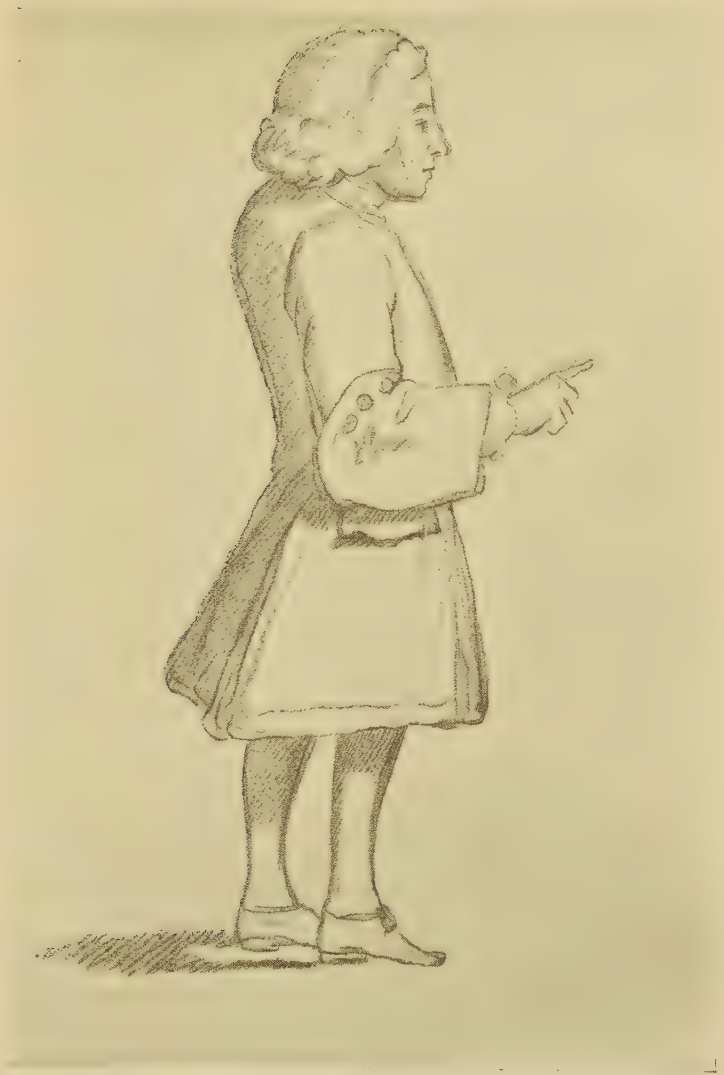
and in his humble, clever way he thought himself the luckiest fellow in the world to have this opportunity of making acquaintance with so many unsuspected beauties in a fine summer morning. About a mile beyond Baptist Mill they rested at a public-house, and in the offer of ale and toddy which Savage gladly accepted the gaoler again exercised his gentle hospitality.

XLIII

For a long time Savage's conduct had severely tried the patience of Pope. Nothing but the most determined benevolence could have successfully overcome the difficulties of making provision for this unfortunate, erratic man's departure. Then, when all might be supposed to have been settled, came the news that after a fortnight, Savage had not even reached Bristol. Pope's letter pointing out that the terms of the arrangement had already been violated, expressed more sorrow than anger ; but he winced under the ferocity of Savage's reply. The exiled man thought his friendship for Pope entitled him to expatiate freely in a letter on the vile conduct of the other subscribers. The more nakedly Pope exposed the disinterested nature of his services, the more eagerly Savage sought to lift himself, through the master's sympathy, to a common elevation from which they might both agree in condemning the inferior conduct of the others who had combined to help him. Pope might say to him what no one else should be permitted to utter unpunished ; but Savage claimed the corresponding right to say to Pope whatever he pleased. He therefore informed him that he could not acquiesce

in any measures which should put him into a state of infancy, but promised within a few days to go to Swansea. Pope smiled at the impudence with which he persisted in alluding to his flight from his creditors as his "retirement." He was accustomed to the phrases about liberty, and he grasped eagerly at the promise in order to allay his irritation at the language in the letter. But when ill health drove him in the December of 1739 to Bristol, he could not persuade himself to visit Savage. The man had broken his word; a meeting would be likely to involve both in a painful confusion.

A year later, the difficulties of persevering in the exercise of any friendly offices towards a man who could only be helped against his will, had multiplied. Savage was again without money. To Mallet, their common friend, Pope wrote in despair at the ever-rising gale of misconceptions through which the barque of his friendship for this unhappy man had to make headway. At the same time he sent another ten pounds and took pains to impress on Mallet the advisability of delivering it to Savage in person, lest by any other process he might provide the captive poet with a pretext for supposing an insult where only a kindness was intended. Through all the annoyance caused by Savage's letters to him, Pope preserved his pity for the man's distress; but he devoutly wished by now that Providence would relieve him of the vain task of friendship executed on behalf



From an engraving after a contemporary drawing.

ALEXANDER POPE.

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of one who "would not suffer himself to have a friend," whose pride had become so inflated by misfortune, that he could no longer receive any offer of a gift without imagining a sneer on the face of the giver.

The situation was made still more acute when, in the September of 1742, Pope had dared to dissuade Savage from executing his proposed return to London with his revised tragedy. Savage's indignation, which had been gathering force throughout the whole of his stay in Swansea, now burst in a torrent of invective upon the man whose unfaltering loyalty had saved him again and again from ruin: they had conspired to *drive* him out of London; to *keep* him out of London; Swansea was a foul swamp, to which he would not wish his worst enemy confined; nobody should be allowed with impunity to take his business out of his own hands; he had much to do with the managers in regard to his play, and with Lord Tyrconnel in regard to the restitution of his stipend; it was his unalterable determination to come to London for these matters; whoever wished to call himself his friend would assist him in the execution of his journey by the remittance of some money. Such was the burden of his letter to Pope.

On being informed of these contents, Savage's other supporters could not be persuaded to continue their subscriptions any longer to a man who coolly ignored the conditions on which they were given; if Mr. Pope still placed an importance in his welfare, Mr. Pope

could supply his needs. Drawing what consolation he could from the reduction to himself alone of the number of persons whom it had been previously necessary to satisfy, Pope once more suppressed his irritation in his desire to be of service. In the calmest language he could command he pointed out the inaccuracy of Savage's angry suppositions : he had gone out of London because his creditors would not allow him to stay in it ; he himself had chosen Swansea for the place of his retirement ; although Pope had been of opinion that Bristol was ill-suited for a frugal expenditure, he had not failed to transfer his subscription to that place on learning of Savage's return there. He now expressed the warm hope that he would succeed in all that he should undertake on his return to London, and, as an earnest of his sincerity, enclosed a sum of money, perceiving the unlikelihood that it would ever be used to further the object for which it was solicited, but content if it still availed to convince Savage of a good will that could survive the roughest usage.

Savage took the rebuke and the money in an easy spirit. He continued to write to Pope, and on his removal to Newgate aired his grievances with his habitual lack of restraint in letters to his friend. Most likely Pope ignored them ; and Savage felt hurt, as he felt hurt at the neglect with which Beau Nash treated all communications from him, with the exception of the first. The more silent Pope grew, the more

articulate and so the more vituperative grew Savage. And still Pope pursued his benevolent intention, undeterred by this language, until one day, in an advertisement of Henley, he observed a hostile significance in the allusion to "Pope's treatment of Savage."

This was too much. Too long already had he suffered Savage to abuse others to him, but he was unable to bear without a cry the perfidy of his abusing him to others; for he made no doubt that Savage had complained to Henley, complained of the conduct of one who, in his own language, had "taken more pains not to affront him than if my head had depended on him." The black ingratitude, the treachery of this, stung Pope at last into retaliation. He did not stop to inquire with any strictness into the precise origin of the phrase which had kindled the long smouldering sense of injury into flame. Savage had insulted his master's belief in the goodness of human nature. This evil speaking to Henley was, after all, but an extension of the ingratitude which expressed itself so freely in Savage's constant reproaches to Pope, that he was meddling in affairs not his own. Until now he had sought about for the best means to extricate Savage from the Bristol prison; but he was content that he should be abandoned to his own devices. In a melancholy and yet determined frame of mind he addressed to him the following letter of farewell:

"Sir,—I must be sincere with you, as our corre-

spondence is now likely to be closed. Your language is really too high, and what I am not used to from my superiors ; much too extraordinary for me, at least sufficiently so to make me obey your commands, and never more presume to advise or meddle in your affairs, but leave your own conduct entirely to your own judgment. It is with concern I find so much misconstruction joined with so much resentment in your nature. You still injure some whom you had known many years as friends, and for whose intentions I would take upon me to answer ; but I have no weight with you, and cannot tell how soon (if you have not already) you may misconstrue all I can say or do ; and as I see, in that case, how unforgiving you are, I desire to prevent this in time. You cannot think yet I have injured you or been your enemy, and I am determined to keep out of your suspicion, by not being officious any longer, or obtruding into any of your concerns further than to wish you heartily success in them all, and will never pretend to serve you but when both you and I shall agree that I should."

XLIV

For Savage's happiness it would have been better if Pope had not waited so long before exposing the full meaning of an estrangement that nothing now could mend. An explosion of rage might have been succeeded by a more forgiving mood; but in the cold and logical terms of this letter, Savage recognised his final abandonment by the one man to whose high influence he had always been proud to trace his literary integrity. Pope had been, still was, his idol. If throughout a long correspondence, dating from his retirement, he had allowed all his weakness and irascibility to be exposed to Pope, it was in the firm conviction that Pope had become his friend in a sense to which no other could aspire. He did not suppose himself to have acted tactfully or even generously in allowing Pope to see him at his worst in his letters, but he did suppose that nothing he could ever say or do would exhaust the lenience of a friendship formed at a period made remote by something more than the mere lapse of years. Of Pope's assumption that he had slandered him to Henley, he knew nothing. It often happens, where the relations between two persons have been severely

strained, that the immediate cause firing the spark of disruption is unknown, or at least imperfectly understood, by one of them.

As Savage read the letter, his brain turned giddy. For the first time he confronted the full consequences of his pride and folly. With overwhelming force the depth of his catastrophe was borne in upon him. He saw himself a ruined man. The enemies whom he had scouted and defied seemed of a sudden to crowd about him in malignant triumph that at last Pope was one of them. He felt all the degradation of being a prisoner, a man shut off in lonely isolation from his fellow creatures. It was as if the confidence in his own worth which had sustained him so often through obloquy, hunger, calamity of every kind, had been suddenly withdrawn.

He could tell his despair to no one. Dagge could never know what a mine of humiliation had opened up for him in this cruel revelation of his failings by a friend. Pope himself never could have suspected what would be the effect upon him of such a letter. In Price and Davies and Strong he saw only casual acquaintances made by the machinery of circumstance. It would be utterly impossible to talk to any of them about what had happened. Their easy sympathy would only deepen his distress.

If he could only see Pope and explain to him. . . . But even the possibility of this remedy was cut off from him. Of course he could write. But how convey

what he felt in anything so artificial as a letter ; above all to one so experienced in the devices of literary eloquence as Pope? And the very fact that Savage, too, was a poet would be bound to rob any written thing from him of the artless sincerity which alone could give some notion of his sorrow. There had been occasions before this when he had envied the simplicity of unlettered men on whose lips the common language of joy or sorrow carried a conviction for which no verbal perfection in a poet ever provided an exact equivalent. But never until now had he realised the bitter helplessness which may beset a poet in a tragic situation arising in his own life. In his despondency, he thought all poetry poisoned at the source. Did it not evade life in the attempt to pourtray it? Had he been no poet, perhaps Anne Brett might have melted at an unsophisticated cry of pain, the widow of Llanelly been overcome by an elemental passion. But they had both served the poet and left the son, the lover, unsatisfied.

If Dagge could only let him go. . . . Harder hearts than Pope's would melt at the note of supplication in his voice.

But it was of no use to long for the impossible. Pope had passed on to the side of Tyrconnel and Walpole, perhaps would even shut the door against his coming. And while he cursed the pursuit of poetry to which, in the wildness of his agitation, he ascribed the futility of all his attempts to gladden

his life, his own lines came into his head to aggravate his sorrow and his self-contempt:

> Say, when in death my sorrows lie reposed,
> That my past life no venal view disclosed;
> Say, I well knew, while in a state obscure,
> Without the being base, the being poor;
> Say, I had parts, too moderate to transcend;
> Yet sense to mean and virtue not to offend;
> My heart supplying what my head denied,
> Say that, by Pope esteemed I lived and died.

Nearly seven years had passed since these lines had been written, years mainly of exile and disappointments, of restless wandering and shattered plans. Now he had lived by his own conduct to give the lie to the sincerity of his own written hopes. False historians would help to misrepresent the facts to posterity. Pope's esteem had gone from him. He was alone with the figment of his own noble aspirations, which had been suddenly made to look little by the mockery to which he had reduced them.

Solemnly in his reply to Pope he protested his innocence of treachery, his regret that he should have been betrayed by passion into extravagant complaint of other persons. Then he waited for the forgiveness which never came. He was not surprised, but he struggled in vain to shake off the weight of this new sorrow. Again and again he drew Pope's crumpled letter from his pocket and sought to glean from its contents some phrase expressing involuntary weakness, on which he might build the hope of reconciliation. But in every fragment, from the

superscription to the signature, the burden of a final farewell sounded its melancholy note.

To Dagge's inquiry what ailed him he replied evasively, and the gaoler was gravely concerned at the listless dejection which had taken a firm hold on his prisoner when the prospect of liberation was within sight. Soon he was able to mislead Dagge's embarrassing curiosity as to his condition by informing him that he felt some pain in his back and his side. But of the larger pain that gnawed him from within he said nothing. Still he continued to hover about the prison door ; but no summer breeze, no sight of swallows dipping and diving, brought relief to his aching spirits. Furtively he glanced along the road for the postman ; and when even the sight of that brisk figure no longer afforded hope, he perplexed his keeper with the frequent inquiry if some one had called for him, or any private messenger had left a note.

On the twenty-fifth of July he confined himself to his room, stirred to a languid curiosity in his own condition by the recognition that all impulse to move abroad was extinguished in him, and that an unfamiliar heat was gathering in his head and limbs. At intervals in the day Dagge visited him, but as he found him disinclined for conversation and impatient of company, he withdrew after a few minutes.

In a few days Savage knew death's messenger in the fever which raged in him, but he was careful to conceal his discovery from Dagge, on whom, as

his strength declined, he succeeded in making an impression of spirits gradually reviving. In solitude, when the acuteness of his suffering subsided enough to allow him to think, he reflected that he had no money to spend on doctors and no wish to increase his debt to his generous keeper.

And the prospect of life no longer tempted him. The trumpets which had sounded their clear note of promised fame to his boyish imagination, notes of which the echo had still lingered in his ears when fame had come to him, were now silent. Silent, too, were the voices of that great company of friends who in the days of his prosperity had always crowded about him in a glittering pageant, to excuse his follies with their flattery, to double the sweetness of success with their applause.

Yet it was not in the gathering silence of his friends that he sounded the depths of his loneliness, as he lay dying in his prison room, but in the mysterious and enduring silence of the woman with lips of stone that never quivered at the oft-repeated cry of "Mother"; the woman of whom his last vision as something once inexpressibly fair, was clouded by the sinister, haunting conviction that by his death alone could he expiate for her the crime of his existence.

It was on the thirty-first of July, 1743, that Savage, made suddenly aware, as he looked up, that Dagge was at his bedside, cried with uncommon earnestness, "I have something to say to you, sir." The keeper stooped,

anxious to receive the message. There was a pause. Then Savage, as if unable to remember what he had intended to communicate, made a helpless motion with his hand, and cried in a melancholy voice, " 'Tis gone!" He died the next morning; and Dagge paid the expenses of his burial in the churchyard of St. Peter.

Thus, in the poverty and the solitude to which many greater men have been reduced on their death-beds, Savage drew his last breath in the Bristol prison : a man whose life he himself fitly enough epitomised in the sad assertion that his days were outnumbered by his sorrows. In the same year died, without issue, Anne Brett's daughter, who, on the death of King George the First, had become the wife of Sir William Lemon.

But another ten years were to pass before, at more than eighty years of age, Anne Brett was to die in her house in Old Bond Street. The bare record of her long life enriches the tragic irony of Savage's short one. No amount of obloquy sufficed to provoke her to utterance on the subject of the poet. Even the fierce but inaccurate condemnation of her cruelty which marred Samuel Johnson's noble biographical essay, issued a year after Savage's death, remained unchallenged by the woman against whom it was fearlessly directed. Nor did she utter one word to discredit the claim to veracity which Johnson established for his friend in his widely spread narrative. Probably she would have

smiled had she been told that it would take more than a century before anything like a serious defence of her conduct was undertaken.

Time was her ally. She survived mother and father, two husbands, at least one lover, and all her children. Her girlhood passed in the days of Charles the Second, her old age in those of the second George; and between them lay the reigns of four sovereigns. She had seen her England in the Revolution, under the Dutchman, under the last of the Stuarts and under the first of the Hanoverians. It would have been easy for her to leave behind some document which would have solved the enigma of her association with Richard Savage; but her indifference to what posterity would think of her was only matched by her contempt for public opinion while she lived.

When she was a young woman, she had not scrupled to use a mask to cover her face in a critical issue of her life. And as she wore through her long and complicated years to old age, she wrapped herself in the impenetrable mask of a silence which remains, and will always remain, to defy the curious scrutiny of the historian. Again and again he turns away fascinated, perplexed, exasperated by the masterly and invisible force which baffles him in every attempt to give a plausible meaning to the inner life of Anne Brett, once Countess of Macclesfield.

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Printed by Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ld., London and Aylesbury.